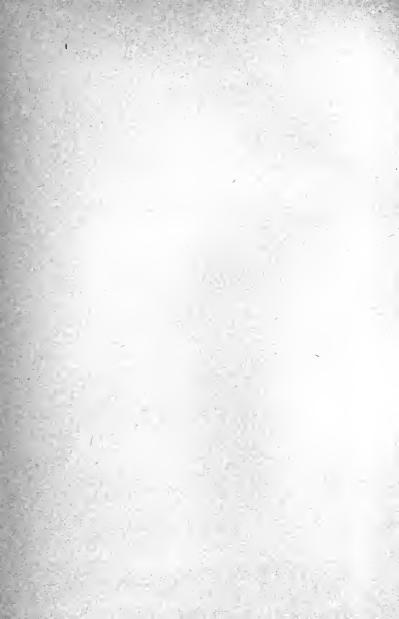
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The Calm, the beauty of the Afterglow.

A YEAR BOOK

OF

Kentucky Woods and Fields



BY

INGRAM CROCKETT

Author of "Beneath Blue Skies and Grey"

ILLUSTRATED BY THE AUTHOR

BUFFALO CHARLES WELLS MOULTON 1901

A Year Book of Rentucky Woods and fields

To the memory of Andubon and to my own Western Kentucky Woods and Fields that knew him for awhile.

Oh, to have been with you In that free life and true, When all your birds passed by Under the new-world sky.

NOTE.

Some of the author's verses in this book appeared originally in The Youth's Companion. For permission to use them here, due acknowledgement is made.

JANUARY.

AR through the woods I have been led to-day—the quiet woods touched here and there with pale sunshine. The way has not seemed long, nor cold, but rather a holy way along which I have walked in peace unspeakable. For the trees are my friends, and their presence is a benediction. Beloved are they of the night, the stars, the winds,—and day by day they clothe themselves in new beauty; and upon them ever lies the grace of all sweet memories. Memories of the rain that came with the tender April sky—memories of many a long, bright Summer hour—memories of the Fall, when the light of a misty sun lingered and failed on the hills, and the fallen leaves lay in all the winding ways.

Now like pure spirits from whom have fallen the garments of sensuousness, leaving the finer grace of resignation—the waiting and the peace—how still my brothers stand in gentle meditation! Of what glorious stature, one in thought, their arms and fingers interlaced along the sky! Each with his own strength, each leaning to the strength of the other—a brotherhood harmonious whose music marks the march of the years.

The oaks are the sturdiest of the brotherhood. The white oak, clad in silver-gray, symmetrical, with drooping, sheltering arms, inviting all homeless creatures to rest under its boughs. Tough are its muscles, hardened by sun and frost for a hundred years. How the birds who nest far above the earth love it, and now, that they are gone, it still holds their deserted nests in its arms and waits for the singing of their love songs again. The love songs of the birds! Dear oak would that I could have been here, on a day long gone, with him who loved the birds, who rested awhile at your feet to hear them sing.

The ground is still strewn with acorns each with its folded mystery of life. The acorns of the white oak in pairs, in shallow cups slightly serrated at the edge, best beloved of the squirrels, and therefore scarcest of all the mast at this season. Shaken down like hail when the Frost Wind came by, how soon they will mount again in new and tender form—new leaf, new life. Alas they will never be permitted to become even saplings, for soon the wood shall have passed away, and the plow have prepared this spot for the seed that man will sow.

The passing of the woods! I hear it like a minor strain running through all the joyous music of earth. The passing of the woods! The fields are sad with the memory of a mighty dead. Man, who spares not, will one day call for the vanished with tears, but there will be

no response, no return. The giants gone from the earth forever, and in their stead a race of pygmies nurtured by those who slew the nobler ones. O trees of God! O prophets to whom are known the secrets of the seasons—is there none to honor you now. Will none pause before you to love you—will none hear your voice? Shall not the birds plead for you? The woodpecker, the vireo, the woodthrush, the flicker, the mocking-bird? And the stars shall they not speak your beauty—as you lift your hearts to them in the silence of the night?

Dark is the black oak, with great knotted limbs reaching out laterally. Dark, and knotted, and twisted—domelike, tall. Like a great candelabrum it stands in early Spring, each pair of branching diaphanous leaves having its long golden tassel. To-day, perhaps, it dreams of its Springtime beauty, and sees, far-off, the rising mist of green.

Scarlet oaks, pin oaks, overcups—they are all here, and with them the tulip-tree, tallest of the throng—a Saul among the tribesmen, handsome and straight: a cup bearer of the Gods whose golden chalices April fills with nectar. Lift your soul, O my brother, and rejoice while you may, for you shall be first to fall, though upon you first the light of morning lies, tracing your limbs in golden gray along the dusky hills.

Scattered through the wood are little cedars—miniature

trees with fine, thick foliage prickly to the touch; aromatic. Year after year they have stood here, apparently of no growth, dwarfed by the splendid boles about them. What rich blue-green they wear! What legends they suggest of lands of pine! And through the white days how softly the snow lies upon them, bending down their boughs, making a denser shelter for the birds, the sparrows, that stay here the year round.

Now along the wayside there is scarce a trace of the tall weeds that love this road, that grew rank here. Pokeweed, ironweed, ragweed, horseweed; tares of the field that men cut down but that spring up again and again, that cannot be wholly plucked up, waiting for the Lord of the Harvest. Surely we have need of them for all they are tares. They broider the way with beauty. Man will garner enough wheat for his own ends. Nature, who cares no more for man than for a weed, will see that her myriad seeds of the commonest kinds fall into good ground and bear flower and fruit. She has a place for the magenta of the ironweed as well as for the gold and white of the lily, and takes thought of it in her dark chambers for the time of the awakening.

The dark chambers where sleep reigns, where no light comes, the dwelling place of seed and root, the under world whence shall spring the countless spears and banners of the great army of Beauty—wherein no voice is heard—where silence moves upon silence working out immortal change—lifeward and deathward forever.

I am walking to-day along the river, following Beauty—far-off, at times to my shame, but never forgetting, never untrue—seeking her revelation of all that ever has been, of all that ever shall be. There is no higher writing, only our eyes are dim from poring over books, and we cannot read the writing on the hills, and our souls are dull to the rapture and the glow. We seek for a prophet and behold the woods and fields are full of prophecies. The fault is in us. Fire-flies are we imagining we are greater than the stars, and that our light is immortal while theirs shall pass away—little creatures who fondly believe that the universe was made for us, and that color, odor, flower, tree, stream, frost, cloud, are for our delight only, and have no meaning apart from us.

How dark the river is—bearing broad islands of drift-wood gulfward; its waves white-capped and heavy with sand washed down with the flood.

Here the river way is wide and low—fringed with willows, flexible keepers of the shore, whose greenish-yellow bodies bend and interlace and catch the alluvial sediment and so build out and out until the course of the river is changed. Now they are packed with brush and small

trees, cornstalks, weeds, and heaps of spongy yellow foam.

Constant the year round the cardinal flashes by, a splendid bit of color against the gray. The great warp of earth and sky shot through with a strand of matchless red. The lifeless warmed by the living—the terrible beauty of the hurrying tawny waves softened by a tenderer note.

Call, my cardinal! My heart hears and answers you. Could you but understand me, could I but whistle to you a flute note so tender that you would know and come to me that we might speak face to face in this Wintry time—what communion would be ours—what dreams of the Golden Age when men, birds, and beasts shall be at peace—when on them shall fall the perfect light of Love.

Sing, my cardinal! The angry river shall be caught up far-off, in tender mist and brought back rainbowed about you and your mate in April's nesting time. Sing to the river and the sky how great is love! Love lifting the river, drawing down the sky, until they are one; transfigured—wearing garments dazzling—of marvelous loveliness.

And yet the sky, to-day, for all 'tis dark, is beautiful. There are flashes of silvery and pale blue light through the broken grays. Flashes that strike down like shafts, smite the woods and the river and are lost.

And what Ishmaelites are the clouds. Advancing, retreating, circling, passing on into the illimitable desert beyond. One day, when the robin sings, a gentler troop of nomads will come along the blue—their white tents gleaming in the sun.

Nightfall and the afterglow: the woods dark on the horizon, the fields silvery with frost; the sky a revelation of the innumerable shining company that stands in the presence of the Lord of all the Earth. From horizon to zenith they stand—their wings touching—led by the flaming Cherubim. O Trappist tree dark-cowled before them—O host of purity! O type of sin!

Far through the quiet the scattered quail call. A light twinkles low in a space of clear sky near the horizon—Night's first star that brightens, brightens, calling out its brothers in service as the angels of the after-glow withdraw into heaven. The blur of dusk comes upon the fields. The sky line grows softer, and about it a faint roseate light lingers. The earth chill rises with a frosty odor. One last call of a quail like a flute-note heard in dreams, and Night has fallen.

Let me stand face to face with Night. She has but one voice now—the voice of silence. By and by she will speak with a thousand.

Let me stand face to face with the silence of night here in the Wintry fields when the sparrows are gone to rest, when men are safely housed from the cold, when on the thick tufts of broom-grass one may lie as on a bed—oh, the mystery of it all! This solid earth a point of light amid innumerable lights —a frost crystal on the fields of space—changing, changing, changing—a flower, a star, a shadow, a bubble on the ocean of God.

And now the broom-grass begins to whisper. I am lying close to its heart. So it keeps its secrets from those who pass it by—and reveals them to all who love it.

The broom-grass is the heather of these Western Kentucky hills, full of color, beautiful in all its growth. Dark-green at first, it springs up by Fall in tall feathery plumes that stand tawny and purple through the Winter. The frost cannot cut it down—the snows but gather in its tops and drift over it for awhile—the sleet leaves it unharmed. Touched by the winds of January it dimples and waves, now silvery, now faded yellow, now purple, now luminous in the sunshine, now cold in the shadow—rioting in color, sweeping on to the edge of the wood.

But, unlike the heather, the broom-grass is unsung. The farmers have no use for it—it is only broom sage—a good-for-nothing unconquered by the plow—a degenerate impoverishing the hills, crowding out from the fence corners—planting a plume here and there until the

hills are covered. And so the broom-grass is unsung of man but not forgotten by the meadow lark. Winter and Summer he sings of it, his home, the home of his loved one—of his nestlings. The Winter song of the meadow lark—how like a voice out of spirit land; a call of some gentle spirit to a companion spirit pent in the flesh! Oh, the yearning, the yearning, when that voice comes at nightfall across the fields! The world slips away—the border land is reached—one lost awhile is there on the broad meadows of God.

To-day the snow has fallen—the second snow of the Winter, light and feathery. How delicate are the six-pointed stars of its crystals—blossoms of infinite grace that cling to the blossomless trees and grasses of the dark earth. Far through the upper air I watched their coming—no gleam—no break in the strange wilderness of gray whence they came—down, down, down cease-lessly—transforming the woods, changing the tone of the fields from purple to white; clothing the slender bushes and weeds with fluffiness—melting into the river without a sigh—without a trace—each flake a marvel of beauty, counting itself nothing in the great sum of beauty—doing the will of God.

The White Earth! The flakes have ceased to fall,

and with the passing of the snow clouds it is not the old earth but a new earth that greets us. No longer a light absorber it reflects the light, bluish-white, dazzling. The pond in the field is dark—the woods are masses of cold purple—the familiar road is a patchwork of gray and white. A disintergration and blending of light. Millions of prisms scattering colors that reunite in wondrous brilliancy.

There is nothing in all nature more delicate in color than the shadows of the snow. The softest blue imaginable—as tender as the deeps in the bluest sky. But this color is not seen by the casual on-looker. One must stand for awhile and gaze steadily past the jeweled crests into the dimples of the snow—there it lies, the eyes' delight.

And with what rhythmical curves the snow lies upon the earth!

"God on His throne is eldest of poets, Unto His measure moveth the whole!"

So moves the snow, taking its place silently in the eternal circle. Curves by the river, curves by the brook, curves over the angles of the rail fence, curves over and under the little scrub oaks with their curled leaves heaped with white—so comes—so passes the snow.

This morning in the rose of the dawn light, I walked

fieldward over the snow that had become crusty by a day's sun and freeze. I trod on jewels. All the prismatic colors flashed from the hills. The ghost of the old moon haunted the western treetops. In the east there was no splendor of cloud, as is often seen on a Summer's dawn, but a quiet unfolding of crystalline light, deepening into day. The sky was unprofaned by smoke, and only some sparrows and a flicker or two were with me in the unforgetable beauty of that hour.

FEBRUARY.

TO-NIGHT I hear the call of wild geese floating down from the starlit silence—the unexplored depths. Their leader is apparently confused, not steadily wedging way northward, but circling—now near the earth—now up again, while his followers, at intervals, answer his call clamorously.

There is much water in the fields and the geese are doubtless seeking some quiet haven for the night, some slough of the cornfields where they can find food—and be at rest. Soon they will drop silently—shadows into shadow—where the gaunt trees of the deadening keep watch.

Over all the woods and fields, this morning, lies a heavy mist charged with sunlight. High on a hill before me a tall, slender sweetgum thrusts his bare arms into clearer light, but his companion trees are muffled in pearl and blue fringed with gold. And out of the mist come the robins—a big flock of them—trooping to the blackgums where the berries hang thick—laughing, a high

shrill laughter, crying: "Peep, peep, peep, peep!" Crowding the limbs, darting up and down in ecstacy—madcaps with Spring in their blood—while over the way one sings a Spring song—a troubadour lilt to the wake-robin and the first yellow violet.

Now and again the robins seem to winter here, and may be seen by twos and threes and in flocks—cheery notes and bits of color on the darkest days. But some months they vanish altogether, and the Winter fields miss their presence and their song.

O woods that call me out from town to-day! O woods that cluster round a quiet water, mirror of the sky—where loiters many a dream, and Mystery stoops for a glimpse of her face in the heavenly deep. O woods my soul salutes you! I lie at your feet.

Around the pond the reflection of the sycamores, pecans, gums, is like loosely woven fringe trembling into the depths. Trees a hundred yards off are reflected as faithfully as those on the bank. Some of the branches in reflection move upward with a twisting, augurlike movement. The water is never still even here where no wind touches it—for bubbles rise from the bottom, burst and circle out in fine rings over the smooth surface of the pond. There is an almost imperceptible current

near the shore in which a little white moth, strange survivor of Summer, is whirled about, and often, with a series of bubbles, the whole face of the pond is wrinkled.

What inexpressible beauty there is in the "still waters" of the Psalmist. The still waters where the tenderer flowers of the soul blossom—the dwelling-place of Peace.

And what inexpressible natural beauty there is in these still waters this February day! What delicate blending of local and reflected color! Darkening the color of the reflected sky, of the trees, of the overhanging banks—the water is itself apparently a soft brown. A bush, light gray on the bank, is dark gray in reflection: the pencilings of the clouds less sharply defined in the sky beneath than in the sky above. And when the stars come here, how gently they must shine from this under-world—as gently as the shining of a holy life.

And how lovely are the banks of the pond mossed in green and brown. Mosses woven in and out among the tree roots with gray and mottled lichens—earth carpetings of incomparable beauty spread everywhere along the quiet ways of Nature, protecting them, mingling tones of green, gray, brown for the feet of men, of squirrels, of birds;—for the feet of the passing Seasons.

To-day a fine pebbly snow has fallen, and has been

whirled along into little drifts—but not a particle has clung to the trees, whose dark limbs are tossing and swaying in the wind. How different the effect of these "hard" snows from that of the "soft" snows of warmer days! The soft snow falls silently—its flakes lighter than down; the hard snow falls swiftly, hissing and rattling through the trees and rolling in great brilliancy along the earth.

This afternoon the sunlight is clear gold and I am out on the brilliant snow. The air sparkles like fine champagne. Frost crystals dance about me and gleam along the twigs of the maples in arabesque. Long lilac shadows stretch across the unbroken glades of white—pink tints glow on every crest. All out-of-doors is like a great bell full of sweet vibrations from the hammer of the cold. The wheels of a passing wagon ring musically along the beaten road. The snow crunches beneath my feet at every step with a note of buoyancy. A woodpecker taps the springy march of lustiness, and, answering, my heart beats: "On and on—out to the gods of Youth, Health, Power!"

Following the call I am come, with the sun a little space above the horizon, to a fairy land—a land strewn with diamonds and turquoise. All along the way I have seen and read the hieroglyphs of the birds—the record, so full of interest, of flicker, cardinal, junco, sparrow,

robin, crow, and of that ne'er-do-weel, the blue-jay. I have noted, too, places of tragedy—of struggle of life against life that goes on unceasingly.

Nevertheless I am come to a peaceful, a beautiful land. I who must have my tragedies—who must leave a writing of my way across the fields of life—am come to a shining place of lilac, blue, pink and gold.

For the edges of all the little eddies and depressions in the snow are bright gold, and in all the shadows is a lovely blue. Looking down through half-closed eyes I see at my feet a mid-summer sky flecked with clouds of shining amber. Heaven below me as above me—I a mote in the immortal light of Beauty.

The sun like a good prophet comes with the promise of Spring. While yet all the fields are in white and no brooks sing.

So sings my heart this evening before the woodland where the topmost twigs are netted in delicate tracery against a pink, rose-golden and purple sky. The tints are so perfectly blended, so luminous, that the effect is beyond words, beyond art to express. Silence only can stand before it—can interpret it. "God is in His Holy Temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him."

Flocks of black-throated sparrows whir up before me in a road cut deep through sandy hills that buttress the

lowlands of the river. The sparrows are feeding on the hack berries along the way, and their notes are very sweet—a sort of musical chatter with minor cadences—the half sad, half merry music of a banquet where there are no bidden guests, but where he "who loveth best" is always welcome.

There is another music, no less charming to me, among these hills—the music of the scrub-oak leaves touched lightly by the wind. These trees do not obey the Fall. Their leaves turn a rich dark red or maroon, but they cling to the boughs during the Winter, and until they are pushed off by the swelling buds of Spring. They are like fine grained leather now, curled and crisp, and their rustling is peculiarly melodious: the longing of the Wind—the response of a sympathetic æolian.

Close at hand grows the blue ash, lichened from the ground to its middle limbs. Lichens, the parti-colored seals of many years come and gone, attesting their heritage here. Lichens like the random brush marks of some master of mellow color who paused here once on a day—a master of blues, grays, browns—painting with a brush given him by a sun and rain crowned Morning—beautiful with tenderest beauty.

Everywhere about me low tones predominate. The willows are soft yellow-green. The old rail fence is light gray, broken with brown. The broom-grass is full of

rich purple, of silvery tints. The earth banks, disintegrated by freezes, thaws and showers, and like diminutive avalanches among the roots that overlang the road, are Indian yellow stained with dull red. There is not a flaming color in earth or sky, from this point of view; and yet there is no sombreness about the picture. Instead it is a restful pleasure to the eye—a meditation before which one who loves the colorist will stand with uncovered head.

This hillward path reveals beauty after beauty to-day. A wonderfully rich sky—the sunlight warming the purple of the ragweed fields—the meadow-larks like winged flutes softly blown. I am following in the steps of the great bird lover—up the river, out across the hills into the broad levels of the uplands—doubtless in his day a noble forest. Now the plant beds for tobacco are being burned, and the smoke of their burning tells of the passing of oak, gum, ash, hickory, poplar. The fragrant smoke! The soul of the wood melting into the universal beauty.

Toward the west there is a belt of woods that makes a dark, fringed sky line, above which the sky is silver-fleeced and golden barred. Northward the colors are purple and greenish-blue, with pools of ultra-marine in

the wool-pack. And the little pools by the wayside are no less rich in color. Even their muddiest water catches some of the splendor above, as in the most defiled soul there are glimpses of heaven.

Suddenly the sun enters a long cloudless space of green lying between purple clouds and the horizon line, and the fields are flooded with intense yellow light: a splendor that lights the woodland—penetrating into its depths, bringing out in strong relief bole, limb, and twig. A rail fence at the edge of the woodland, wet with melting frost, turns to glistening yellow—the shadows on it blue. Far-off the woods are olive gray, and the snow patches on the hillsides are bathed in pale, lustrous gold. Surely this is a mount of transfiguration!

Ah, the redbird singing! The beauty of the sky intensifying the beauty of his breast. Song and color—mysteries that lift me and bear me on I know not whither, far through the wonder of the afterglow.

Marvelously the light came—as marvelously it fades. Now a rose flush on the higher, darker clouds; now brighter gold at the edge of the cloud line; now patches and shreds of flaming gold in the pale, clear green; now, as the sun sinks, pink, cold purple, brilliant carmine: carmine that burns across the hills in red fire, that creeps up the trees, steeping their twigs in its glory, that fades not as I watch, though all the other colors of the sky are

darkened, that seems as if it might remain holding back the night, making darkness its slave forever.

Yet, O glorious light, you—even you must obey the law of change. A dark finger pushes up against your luminous shield: the finger of Fate. To-day, on these darkening hills you have cast your last radiance. To-morrow—

At this time of the year the earth is like a lute that trembles with the first light prelude of a master. Under the leaves are found the poems of Spring—the earliest editions very delicately bound—wake robins, white hearts, violets. The woods and fields are waiting to welcome the bluebird and the sugarbird—the first with his trually, trually! the dearest song of all; the second with his insistent call for Peter, Peter, Peter! Blades of green peep up through the brown. The dormant sap begins to dream. The maples take on slowly a fuzzy red. The purple grackles, the cowbirds begin to swing in the treetops; and by the pond "looking through glass windows" may be heard hyla—a feeble peep, peep, that hushes for the nearing foot.

I have heard it—the Spring song of the Flicker! "Quick, quick, quick, quick!" All day long it has rung across the fields—a lusty love call.

And the bluebird is come! I have not seen him but I have heard him somewhere above me, and with him are many memories of orchards in bloom—of the spring at the foot of the hill—of the log house with its clapboard roof weather-stained and curled—of the hollow in the gatepost where I knew he would build his nest and greet me with a love song—of the great log barn at the edge of the wood, its floor white with saltpetre from accumulated tobacco stalks, and where he was sure to be flying in and out between the logs, making music with the purple martin under the rafters—all these memories come with the first note of his song—the simple, homely life of which he is the poet.

For a while the bluebird left us—for three or four Springs—and from many parts of the country bird-lovers lamented him. "Oh, to see him again! Oh, to hear his song!" So the threnody ran through the land. Now he has proved himself unforgetful of us: he is constant as of old. Singer of the blue—wearing its colors—melodist of Faith.

Weave, weave, weave, with fingers deft and slim,
O maples tall against the sunset sky,
A cradle robe of witchery soft and dim
In which the nestlings of the dreamer Wind may lie.

The oriole is come, singing his good-night song to the

new moon low in the west. Gently the maples weave in the sunset colors upon the loom of quiet. Weaving in the bright threads—the crimson, the gold—weaving in the pale yellow, the cold purple, the gray. Weaving in the stars—the early stars, lilies of the garden of Night. Weaving in the oriole's song—the shadows—silence—sleep.

MARCH.

THIS morning the old moon is hanging in the treetops, a curled and silvery feather, and at its side a little dewdrop star trembling with light. The eastern horizon is netted with twigs—dark gray and rose-gold. The ground is frozen. March the fickle has turned his back on Spring.

Now is the time to watch for the advance couriers of the birds, and to ponder the mystery of their coming. Along the highways of the air far beyond the range of the naked eye they have traveled by day, by night across seas and lakes—following the rivers—looking for their appointed nesting place, the home of their love making for years. Coming, coming! The timid by night, the bold by day—until their eyes and hearts greet the welcoming hills, the familiar tree, the sheltering covert. And then the song that, like an old-fashioned hardy flower, speaks to us from the looked for haunt.

What a flight is theirs—warblers, thrushes, vireos! Below, above their little bodies the deep of night! The clouds to confuse; the gleaming, man-saving light of some stormy coast to lure them to death. On and on in silence, their wing beats marking time for the advancing

season—by twos, by threes, by hundreds, over the sleeping earth, the lifted shadow of trees, the mist trails of rivers. Stopping day by day for food, but with one purpose urging them ever—one strange longing for a certain place where their mates shall be chosen, their vows be said, their young reared.

Are the pewees and blackbirds I hear this morning just come? It is impossible to tell. They may have been here for a week, awed into silence by the winds and the hordes of wild clouds rushing across the sky—afraid to launch their tiny boats of song on such a rough sea. I know only that till the frost is gone there are pauses in the music—one day the choristers hid—not a note; the next day, with the waving of a baton of sunshine, a look of the master, the symphony of Spring breathes, rings through wood and field.

March, for all its bluster, has golden days. This is one. The more charming in contrast with the hurly-burly yesterdays of the month. To-day my friend the cardinal is making love. I can hear him now pleading: "Sweet, sweet, sweet—do, do, do!" and I catch a glimpse of him dropping like a splendid flower into the ravine where his sweetheart waits. The mist scarfs are wound about the hills and trail in the river. The track of the

sun on the water is flame-color, over which wild ducks skim; and on the horizon the long, dark, graceful lines of their kindred waver toward the west.

In sheltered places the first Spring Beauties begin to show. Soon they will cover the hills with pink, white, lavender. Like the strains of a dainty madrigal are Spring's first flowers—delicate, simple, graceful.

Winter again with a high wind and flurries of snow. The birds are silent but the great organ of the wood pours forth a solemn music responsive to the touch of the wind. This is the music of the soul—of the imagination. Sitting by a majestic black oak I can feel its massive frame tremble with the harmony. On through the woods the trees sway to the noble rhythm—while the music swells—dies away—now shakes the earth with its rushing diapason.

The Dante-like souls are here to-day. I can see them now a vast procession sad browed, steadfast eyed, dusk clothed treading the way of purgatory, of hell, of heaven—for whom there is but one God: He who sits upon His everlasting throne—but one thought—the thought of Him—of those who love Him—of those who serve Him. Impassioned contemplationists—spirits who walk apart—passing, passing into the unknown.

This afternoon the fields are whitened by a sudden wet snow. The plover are circling and calling, their wings showing white against the sky. They seem to enjoy the storm, breasting the wind and swinging down its current at a great rate—flashing over my head in gray and silver. How my pulse quickens as I watch them and the spirit of boyishness grows strong within me. I too will breast the wind and race with it—its comrade, its brother. Its vigor shall be mine—we will taste together the old free life, faring where we will.

The quail have many paths—through the tall tangled "redtop" in the fence corners—places of restfulness, of coziness from the whirling storm. Having raced with the wind I lie at full length in one of these bird homes, and put out my tongue for a taste of the snow that is sweet with the tang of earth and cloud. Close at hand are the juncos for whom good Mother Earth has grown tall weeds with nourishing seed. What a picture they make under the snowy ironweeds—and how he praised them who knew them so well.

As I enter the deep woods the storm seems to be only in the treetops. The spider's webs, woven on a warmer day, are like handkerchiefs of exquisite lace, catching and holding the snow crystals that sift slowly through the boughs.

The woods at night! The familiar trees, friends of the day, how strange. Whispering, whispering—beckening—writing dark legends on a faint scroll of sky. A flutter of wings, a shaken bush sends thrills to my finger-tips. A twig startles me with its cold, wet touch. I know the rough oaks and hickories, the smooth bole of the painted beech, but to put my hand upon them does not reassure me. They are members of another brotherhood, living in another world. The screech-owl, their unseen companion spirit, moans near me in the darkness. Skeleton trees rub their arms together with a creaking sound. All around me there are voices low, indistinct: then I hear the bay of a hound; the dark fancy passes. My hand comes in contact with a sassafras twig; I taste its wholesome flavor and am no longer afraid.

And now, caught in the meshes of the treetops, I see the stars. Occasionally I hear a faint *speep* from some bird disturbed on its roost. I take a long breath of the woody odors, pungent with frost. My feet find and follow a well-loved path.

The woods at night! I stand apart from them and see their dark tops against the sky, rising out of the shadow of the fields in solemn beauty. What watch they keep—noble warders at the Gate of Silence. What thoughts are theirs or storm and calm through a century of seasons! What peace, what death struggles they know

in their depths! What communion they hold with the stars, the clouds, with the little birds that know their boughs and nestle in them through the long watches.

What spirit of the innumerable host of Beauty led me by the river this morning to hear that sweet sparrow song? To him I vow an offering of the first spicewood blossoms: for 'twas a lovely strain and one that I shall not soon forget. I had been following some of the master melodists of the mind indoors when the spirit called me; and I went forth with their songs in my heart to hear a song they loved, by a constant member of the Great Choir. It was by the still, wintry river amid brown and broken weeds, with scarce a bit of green, but the singer had heard a whisper from the reddening catkins—a secret—and knew.

The red maple boughs are misty with color, and through them breaks the orange sunrise. Overhead the sky is soft gray with bluish streaks. Robins, bluebirds, cardinals are singing. The robin:

"Spring is here, yes sir! Spring is here, yes sir!"

"Sweet, sweet, sweet—do, do, do! What cheer? What cheer?" sings the cardinal; but simpler, tenderer, the

song of the bluebird. Cheery, yet of a loveliness, a something that has passed from the earth.

Here would I worship, with my very soul Enraptured with the beauty of this hour— This tender light—the unfolding of the flower Of sunset.

A kingfisher is circling above the maples sounding his rattle, his splendid blue and white flashing on the rosy afterglow. Far to the southwest there is a succession of sunlit peaks lifting their heads in the violet air. Who has not yearned at times for that mountain land of the sky?

The woods are yet dark and wintry looking, streaked with the white of the sycamore. Somewhere in the brown weeds the sparrow-hawk sees his quarry and hangs against the sky, apparently motionless. In the low lands the spring *peepers* are at it again in high pitched yet mellow chorus, answering one another in minor and dominant chords.

The music of the frogs, the smell of the upturned earth, the swinging hand of the sower. Notes of the simple life that brings forth men of heroic mold for whom the world waits. Holy symbol of toil, the plow! With it the husbandman, high priest of the fields, goes forth in the dawning and is sprinkled with the heavenly dew, touched by the heavenly fire. From it shall flash back the shekinah of of the hills—on it, at eventide, the shadows lay hands of peace, and through the night earth shall press it close to her bosom and bless it for her fruitfulness sake.

Out through flurries of sleet,
Out from the ways of men,
I go on joyous feet—
For the wild-spice blooms again.

Buds encased in crystal. All the morning sleet has fallen, hissing through the trees and dead grass, and as it falls it rolls into little pockets among the crisp oak leaves by the path—caskets filling with pearls.

Occasionally the sun strikes along the ice-covered limbs with marvelous color effect. The trees wear rainbow hues, drip golden rain.

The clouds are torn into shreds, driven before the wind—hurled over the horizon. The tree tops are whipped together—there is a steady roar like that of a swiftly passing train. Now and again a snow flake—a

raindrop falls. The tide of life is rising, the green spray is tossed high on the forest; but there is a struggle between the old and the new; bud and frost, blossom and snow flake, and the fields resound with the clang of battle.

But rest you here for a space little snow flake, rest you here for a space on the bosom of the first violet in these deeps of calm. The last flower of Winter, the first of Spring. So let your life melt into its life, your beauty into its beauty,—one, as God wills.

WEEPING willows in a gauze of delicate pea-green, black berries tipped with sparks of sap-green, the swelling buds of the sweet gum, gray-green; such is the color scale this April morning. Bright notes set in brown bars. Spring's fire, the ashes of Winter.

Snipes run along a marshy place in the meadow or stand on the hummocks of saw-grass, their images reflected in the water, where also lie the white clouds and the blue sky. Here soon I will look for the dainty blue-eyed grass, that suggests some quaint old-fashioned place where the mowers go down into the meadow with the music of the whetting of scythes and the fragrance of the heaped swarth. Here, too, a heavy bass joins in the chorus of the *peepers*—a solo, then silence, a duet, and again the chorus in high pitched unison.

The sparrow hawks are at their courtship. The female poised lightly on the topmost twig of a sweet gum, a spire-like twig so small that the hawk seems resting in the air. Here she waits the coming of her lover, and presently with the airiest of flutterings they fly over the wood and drop into its secret places.

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Redwing has come, the minstrel of showers and the rainbow. What is more delightful than his song as he glides with gently moving wings into a tree top? "O-ka-lee!" calls one, "O-ka-lee-ah!" is answered across the meadow, the notes like those of a flute blown from the depths of a crystal spring. And the scarlet on his wings, is it not caught from the flame bearer of the sunset to glow here in this greening world? I pause and listen. Far away, so faint I can scarcely hear it: "O-ka-lee! O-ka-lee-ah!" O dreaming time! O meadows of April! O tender voices that are come again at the call of love!

On the fresh, plowed fields a myriad gossamers twinkle in the yellow-green sunlight. Where do they lead, who knows? these threads of a fairy spinner. On through space the old earth swings caught in their golden meshes.

The apricots are in bloom filling the orchards and gardens with white. Warm showers have brought out the lilacs, spireas, bush-honeysuckles. The air is full of delightful odors sowed broadcast by the Great Sower. Dainty touches of pink are in the gray. The peaches are in bud with scattered blossoms like pink and white snowflakes on their leafless boughs. This fine color of early Spring is akin to that of a clear dawn, delicate,

refined, luminous. Or like the music of a mandolin lightly touched under the tender beauty of a new moon, while the rose of the afterglow is in the west. As far as the eye can reach, valley and hill are covered with this blossom snow.

This afternoon there is an apparent pause in the advancing tide. The sky is lowering, the lanes are deserted. Streams overflow their banks, the lowland road is a muddy current. Yet what is more beautiful than the rain fringe trailing across the fields, the gray above met by freshest green below. No artist ever put such lovely color on canvas. The rain comes on in showers, the big tough-skinned raindrops falling heavily and slowly, then the increasing patter, the steady downpour, the gleam breaking a silvery way through the clouds.

The red maples, shining with moisture, show the deepest notes of color—there are many broken reds and grays. The meadow brook is white with cascades—a charming picture that Theocritus or Herrick would have loved.

Another tidal wave of cold. All the week it has rained and the peachtrees and apricots look chill and

forlorn in their bedraggled Spring finery. Their blossoms strew the ground with dingy white. The birds, too, that a week ago were singing so rapturously, have left the world musicless. Robin skulks in the bushes, his love-song hushed by a touch of sorrow. So the world is full of silent voices that once were its joy—so sadness waits on all.

The redbuds, wild cherries, and coffee beans are in bloom—the jonquil's gold is scattered at each doorstep. Thrushes are singing—the vireo is here. The wood violet, with its unfailing grace, broiders the woodland path.

I have left the green world to-day to breath the balm of the red cedars that crown a height overlooking the road and the lowlands toward the river. They are the holy brothers who year in, year out watch over the dead. All the birds know them and fly to them for rest. The shy, first blossoms put forth their beauty here protected from the bitter winds, warmed by the resinous mold. Windflowers, little children in white, lift here their hands in prayer, with the bluebells, unafraid in God's quiet room. White violets, brides of Heaven—doves sitting trustfully on their nests—tanagers like scarlet flowers of song, wrens, field-sparrows, juncos—undisturbed by the noises of the world, rest here, cared

for, in this Cloistered place, where only the murmur of prayer is heard, the litany of the wind.

'Tis good to be here where a voice from the hereafter speaks gently to the soul: "Be not afraid!" And as I sit looking up through the dark green branches. starred with blue-gray berries, the sunlight is sprinkled in benediction and lies in little flames around me. A dove, a voice of the soul bidding farewell to the world, at peace with God, calls through the stillness. A wood-thrush lifts his heart in song, earth is swung nearer heaven.

Broad fields of rich brown earth new woven by plows—A cloud of green on the willows, and flame on the redbud's boughs.

At a wayside gate opening into a field whose crest is crowned with tall pines, I find my first apple blossom, very pink and fragrant. The springtide is at its loveliest when the apple is in bloom. It is the very crest of the wave breaking in pink and white foam—blossom spray blown across the fields. And the scent of the apple blossoms. Once on a day she wore them in her hair—their perfume—you will not forget.

The dogwoods are in full white; it is time to plant corn—to go a-fishing. What a beautiful border their blossoms make, with those of the red bud, about the feet of the tall gums, maples and oaks. In all seasons the

dogwood is one of the handsomest of trees. In Spring white, in Summer its layer-like branches rich in light and shade; in the Fall bright with red berries and maroon and reddish leaves, and in Winter its fine upcurved twigs tipped with grayish buttons.

Under the dogwoods the first butterfly flutters past like a wind-blown blossom. May apples, the umbrellas of the country children, are thick on the hill slopes—each holding up, half hid, its waxen flower. And dotted among the trees are Sweet Williams

"that grow for happy lovers."

But sweeter than them all are the blossoms of the sassafras now clustering on bare boughs overhanging the creek. How the bees, true critics of all wood sweets, love them! Their odor has nothing of the hothouse about it. It is altogether of out-of-doors—wonderfully fresh and spicy. As the sassafras tree draws into its roots the raciness of the old free life and offers it to man, so the sassafras blossom draws from the rainbowed air its pleasantest tang—the very spice of dew and sun—and shakes it down on the hearts that wait it.

The river bank is purple with orchids under the amber and green tipped boughs of the sugar maple. And with the orchids scores of Dutchmen's Breeches—daintiest of

flowers with coarsest of names. The oriole turns like an orange flame about the high limbs—pecking, singing, eating. But why he should try to stand on his head while he sings I am unable to find out.

Now April like a vestal feeds the flame
That glows, rose-red, on many a tasseled lamp
Upon the black oaks; and the redbuds camp
Along the creek; and Bob White tells his name.

The maple leaves are like young squirrel's ears. The titmouse is calling incessantly, and there are many fine-silvery-fluted sparrow songs blown gossamer-like from the ravines and sheltered places. The wood warblers, little bodies so puzzling to a bird lover, are coming in,—now silent, now singing with the ebb and flow of Spring. Gulls that have beat their way up from the Gulf flash white wings over the river, resting for a moment on its waves, and off again in graceful circles. The cottonwood, a giant of the riverside, has put on its silver-gray. The haze on the distant wood has deepened. The colors change through softest gradations across the fields—the blue of far-off woods, the gray of the nearer, the misty green of the willows by the shore, the flash of the green sparks and fire of the larger leaves.

Close to the ground in a brush-heap is chewink, busy with the very earthy thought of making a living. He is

alternately a poet and a fellow of business, and he puts on one coat or the other as the mood moves him. Presently he will leave the earth far beneath him, and from the highest twig of the highest tree he will shake out his happy bell-song.

There is much nest building going on. The birds fly by with timothy straws, feathers and bits of twigs in their bills; the female, as a rule, doing the work while the male does the singing. This seems scarcely to comport with the other lover-like qualities of birds, their constancy; their united care of their young, but doubtless the song of the singer repays the worker as it repays me a hundred-fold.

The "Weavers" and the "Carpenters" are the chief nest builders represented here, and soon many homes will be ready for the eggs and the nestlings.

The vireos and orioles are the airiest of builders. Many a strand of tough-fibered bark is used in swinging their nests from the outer limbs. Sometimes these nests are wrecked during a storm, turned upside-down, and the eggs or the young dashed to the ground. Then how touching is the scene with the parents hovering over the ruin, calling helplessly above their dead. They cannot understand, nor can we, Life, Death, Sorrow.

But these tragedies are the exception. The birds are optimists; they teach us many a lesson of joy; of bright

living. They have their humorous side. The flickers, for instance, are a funny lot. I have seen them, the female sitting very upright and sedate at first, six or seven feet from the male, through many a courtship, and it equals anything in the "settin' up" of the mountaineers. The whole process of hitching a "cheer" nearer and nearer is carried out to perfection, only instead of a chair the male has at his disposal a series of bows that would do credit to a Grandee of Spain. With these he proceeds to captivate his dear, swelling out his chest to show its fine mottlings, bending his neck to display the splendid band of red there, and all the time saying "Sweeter, sweeter, sweeter, sweeter, sweeter." This elaborate affair may be carried out on the ground or on a limb high in the air it is all one to the flicker, if he wins his sweetheart.

To-day the spirit of Halcyon is in the woods. April stands at the portal through which she must shortly pass forever. For though one may come again bearing her name, bringing the similitude of her offerings, yet this April with all she gives of hope, memory, beauty, can never return. Yet how joyously she goes.

Long shadows, tremulous, lie on the wold, Dappling the sunny spots of dewy gold. Love, hope—are woven by swift shuttle wings, A net of joy in which the whole earth swings.

MAY.

AM introduced to May by a pair of summer tanagers that flutter before me as I walk toward a bordering wood to watch the unfolding of the leaves. Joy be with you comrades! Flash across the glad earth. Thread the the shadows with light—May salutes you, my heart bids you Godspeed.

And now that I am come to the wood, lady-slippers gleam, sun-touched, in the glade where the mold is like a great sponge full of moisture and covered with ferns and mosses. Wake-robins, sweet williams, yellow violets crowd the hummocks and peep above the rotting logs. Life is silently transforming all about me. The interlaced twigs are veiled in green. The unbeaten center of the woodland road is pink, white, green, yellow. The hoof-prints, marks of winter hauling, are fringed with delicate fungi. So soon Nature reasserts herself when man has passed—so soon the wilderness that blossoms as the rose overflows its borders and once more carpets the fields with its own beauty.

The locusts are in bloom-their fragrance like the

letter of a dear friend. Along the lanes they stand, marking the way to quiet homesteads—or clustered in the hollows of the hills to invite one beneath their shade, that is beloved of all fine sweet grasses. It is in one of these hollows that I have found rest this afternoon, with the sun well down on the distant treetops and the song of a plowman in my ears. It is here only that the bluegrass comes to perfection in Western Kentucky—the affinity being strong between these two aristocrats of the State. And so the grass at my feet is thick and long, a pure sap-green in the sunlight—lusty and dark in the mottled shade. Overhead the blossoms hang, white in dull sage green—and the hum of bees is drowsy music there. Let the world busy itself about work—this hour I will "loaf and invite my soul."

The black oak bears a blossom of song to-day—the mockingbird. Sitting at the foot of the tree I lift up my heart to the blossom above. The fragance of all song is there—the joy and abandon of it—amid the green leaves and under the blue sky. O men, toiling in the fields below, listen! What is better in all your philosophies than this? Love, love, love—amid the green leaves and under the blue sky. Do you hear it? Do you understand it? You with your labor shall find no

higher wisdom—for love is the fulfilling of the law. Ah, the very oak trembles with the ecstacy of the music! What dreams encompass me! The plows flash at the turning of the furrows—the sheep bells shake out their soft melodies—the mists trail along the low meadows—the creek sparkles at the break by the hillside—but for me all are but the lights, shadows, voices of a dream, while I float by on that marvelous stream of melody. Through all the depths of my being its beauty thrills—till silence and a strange awakening tell me he is gone—"the slim Shakespeare of the tree."

To-day, by chance, I almost heard The secret of a little bird,— A tender secret whispered low To him whose answering heart would know.

It was in a thicket and I had crept in very silently and sat with white wood-lilies about me. The little fellow sitting on the edge of the nest looked down and nodded as if to say: "It's all right; I feel able to work for a dozen now."

How much of beauty the fields would lose if all the thickets were cut away; and how the birds would suffer. Here the meadow sweeps round the thicket's walls of green, and the mower goes by, but in this green retreat all is quiet and peace. Tender fungi grow in its flower

rooms, fed with the palest dew of sunlight. Wood thrushes make it their home, and many a shy wood warbler whom one would never know save by waiting here.

Leaving the thicket the path leads me along the edge of the thick woods where the fleur-de-lis grow. A sluggish water creeps around the feet of the tall scarlet oaks, and in it are lit these flowers of gold, blue, and white that shine for the coming of dusk.

White moths are wearing circles against the vermeil sky, and all the trees are still and dark as ebony. The dusk is merged in night.

Out of the glory of the dawn the oriole comes with a song. Redwings, song-sparrows, answer him. The blackberry bushes, in pure white, are bowed with the weight of dew pearls. The sky is softest, clearest amber with rose and straw-colored clouds at the zenith.

Dawn! Symbol of all that is pure, of all that is holy. Inspiration of song—the Day Spring, inexhaustible, flowing to refresh the world. Out of it come hope, life, gladness. From darkness men have turned their faces toward it—seeking God—in it He has revealed Himself in His greatest beauty. Ages ago it called men to prayer—its light led them from their own country

into a land of better things—and touched their hearts with heavenlier aspirations. Happy is he who to-day finds the old, old religion in it—the still small voice—the Eternal Beauty.

The "raincrow" is calling by the creek. What a silent fellow he is! How noiselessly his long grayish body slips through the trees. Do the clouds gather at his call? Is he a prophet of darkening skies, of showers? The farmers hold him so—but I have proved him a false prophet in more than one dry season. Like his cousin over seas he seems but a wandering voice to hundreds who have heard but have never seen him. A mystery of the woods, associated with the screech-owl and kindred birds of ill-omen.

This woodland that the raincrow loves is also the home of many sweeter-throated birds—as shy as he:—the warblers. High above me the sunlight falls in golden-green showers—yet softly and subdued as befits singers who are shy.

Yet even in this half light, and in this quiet they do not often venture from their lofty arches where they flit swiftly about as if holding the earth unworthy of their touch. How gracefully and deftly the flycatchers take their food in midair. One cannot conceive of a daintier

way to satisfy hunger. It is apparently all color and rhythm—with green boughs and violet sky for canopy—the pure air for a table—and in its midst the sweet boquet of the woods.

The warblers, by reason of their elusiveness, by turns elate and depress the bird lover. He sees them, he knows them to-day, to-morrow he may follow them only to know them not. But how pleasant is a speaking acquaintance if one may never know them better. What joyous ways they lead one in through all the changing year. In the dawn light, in the dusk light, in paths untrod by many feet, in lanes that loiter through quiet fields and by still waters, out from the gossip, the petty bickerings, the clash of creeds into the freedom of God's sweet room of out-of-doors.

One day the world will miss these "little brothers of the air"—ah, the silence, the regret, then.

On the still surface of the creek water spiders are sporting, trailing ripples that glint with changing color.

As I stand on the bridge looking at a jam of logs in the creek, through which the water gurgles in foamy cascades, a measuring worm, that humble tailor of the woods, is taking the measure of my coat sleeve, erratically, but doubtless with a purpose beyond my ken. Passing on the hillward way I meet with king birds and larks, and a flock of bobolinks following a rooting hog,

the backs of the singers glistening in the level sunbeams, so music oftentimes waits on material things. Not a note now have these poets of Spring. They, too, must eat.

Now is the high tide of song. The balm of early Summer is in the air, the wind inundates the woods and fields with low, sweet sound. Butterflies, little white and mauve *Hesperia* and splendid *Papilios* flutter by. A song-sparrow, on a dead tree just back of an osage hedge, sings rapturously! A low note thrice repeated and then an exquisite *cadenza*. What art—yet how artless! Surely his sweetheart must believe it the sweetest love song in all the wide world.

The meadow across the way is bright with the blossoms of blue-eyed grass—shy stars in this heaven of tender green where dwells the gentle spirit of Spring.

Lying at full length on the meadow, in the timothy and clover, drawing in deep breaths of their fragrance,—one with the bees, the butterflies, the clouds, the birds,—communing with the soul of Beauty: the deeps above sown with islands of white, the gentle heart of the earth—the wonder, the dream—what more shall I desire? Not the unfolding, the making plain of it all; not a vision of the haven; not of the why I am here, a mote in the sunbeam of God—no, only that my heart may be

as fragrant with love as the clover is fragrant, that I may learn of it.

A crane flies low across the meadow toward some quiet willow-bordered water. The lireodendrons lift their deep cups of reddish-green gold to the thirsty bees—cups full of nectar, thick with pollen.

The fences are overrun with dogroses, earliest of the wild rose clan, in peaceful tartans of varying pink. Oh, for a day to follow where they lead, far into the "back country," where there is many a bramble thicket, where wild grasses push their way across the neighborly roads: where comes no pageant of the proud; where often pass the barefooted children of the poor. There, it seems to me, He would have walked, had He been here in the olden time, led by the flowers of the way to the flowers of the heart-there, it seems to me, He would have tarried for a while under some humble rooftree while some Martha prepared for Him her best, some Mary set at His feet. There the mourning dove would have touched His heart with her sorrow; the wood-thrush have led Him with joyful song through glades of wild grape and fern.

The brown thrasher sings now, while the wheat is taking on richer green—a clear velvety green, over which

waves of color pass: purple shadow after purple shadow rolling on and on, breaking at the rail fence that skirts the hill. Gentian brightens the fence corners. The wet places are blue and golden with flags. The road is edged with wild phlox, corn-cockle, mint. The gold of morning is set in the purple glooms—a wonderful tapestry of rich, varied pattern, of lustrous texture. The air is filled with the fragrance of wild grape, most grateful of all woodland odors. There is something like an old sweet song in this perfume—a song one keeps in his heart and only sings to a kindred heart at the gate of memory.

Ah, what joy to be in the fields now—to rest on the heart of the Great Mother beating with renewed hope; to forget the poor gabble of the market-place in the message of the wind; in the putting forth, for lands beyond the horizon, of gleaming cloud sails; to hear what the streams say, rich with opened springs of treasure; to be led as simply, as joyously as a little child.

Bright glades of sun, the vesper singing clear,
The new life breaking thro' the old—the gleam
Of passing wings—and ever far and near
The heart-heard music of a long, long dream.

JUNE.

From the far fields and the woods and ever within me are ringing Voices I know and yet know not, voices of crying and laughter: Of the dusk-coming prophet stars, of birds in the dawn-light singing—

Of one that is strange as the wind's is, from the mist hid land of hereafter.

And aye with the voices silence, silence the shadow unlifting—
The shadow of God on my soul, the word He has left unspoken—
The echoless deeps of His space, the clouds that forever are drifting

By His luminous islands of love, and that bring to my heart no token.

THE trumpet vines are blowing reveille—a hundred—a thousand coral bugles sounding the morning call of peace. Blessed music! Blessed fields that know not the strife of brother against brother, whose blossoms are unstained with blood. Along the lane the trumpet vines stand, the lane little travelled, shadowed all day by tall grasses and overhanging boughs, the lane leading by an oak, an elm, low drooped, majestic—kings reigning jointly over all this fair realm. The oak a hundred feet tall with the spread of a hundred feet, dark, muscled like a giant athlete, a druid holding aloft bunches of mistletoe, a bird lover holding the young birds safe from storms,



Now is the high tide of Summer.



JUNE 55

safe against his great heart. The elm of broader sweep, of finer fibre, more delicately appareled, cleaner limbed. Kings they have been for a century, dearer and dearer to the heart of the earth, to the birds, to the cattle at noonday, dearer, God will, to man, that they may be kings for a century more.

The corn is being plowed, the plowman, like an artist working back and forth over his canvas, changing the cornfields from gray-green to a rich brown streaked with yellow-green. A light mist lies on the woods. Wild sweet potato vines are woven in and out the fencerows, hanging them with pink-throated silvery blossoms in which the bumble-bees revel, coming out drunken with nectar and yellow with pollen. Milkweed has put on its finest purple. Gay white and yellow moth-mulleins shake their butterfly flowers against the lips of the wind, the white umbels of elder make the path like one leading up to the palace of the good Haroun Al Raschid. A little brook slips under the willows, darkens, and dances out again laughing in the sun, laughing up in the eyes of thrashers, black birds, sparrows, jays, wrens who have come here to taste its wares. A Baltimore oriole preens himself and sings within a few feet of me. Now is the time when his voice may be heard at its best with that of his cousin of the orchard, fine feathered fellows with delightful songs. "It's very good to be here. 56 JUNE

Hear it? Know it?" he sings to me, to the loitering clouds, to the dimpling water.

The wheat is nearly ready for the harvest, gold crested, garnet-stemmed, rippling softly or rioting with little whirlwinds that dance this way. Dimpling, rustling, running in waves to the woodland, a far-off darkgreen bar. Beauty can express herself no more fully, can add no more delicate touch, no fresher color. The fields are full of sap. There are no sere tips on the multitudinous grasses or leaves. No dust clouds hang along the horizon, the noon-light has not lost the freshness of the dawn. The plumage of the birds is lustrous, full. Each leaf is in its place, each cell crowded with chlorophyl, the woods reflecting light in sparkling showers, diffusing it in tenderest yellow-green. The innumerable insect army is under way, the air trembling with a myriad wings—moth, butterfly, beetle, ant, grasshopper, the unseen highways of the grass are alive with multitudes of travellers. The green world is busy, glad, blossom laden.

The vanilla-like perfume of the buttonbush is wafted from the creek. The clustering wild onions are like a

fine-meshed net dotted with tufts of magenta. The shadows grow long—stretching in faint violet far across the hills. The west is deep rose with tall castles of purple cloud—Dusk waits at the horizon.

The night call of the birds—To rest—to rest—to sleep! So soon the final sleep comes—the last goodnight.—The fading light—the shadow—the quiet.—God keep you, O Vesper! God hear your evening hymn! God keep you all safe—little birds!

In the harvest. The shocks are like the golden tents of a mighty, splendid army. Redwings and song-sparrows are singing along the fence-rows and in the tall timothy that borders the wheatfield. The hedges are bright with butterfly weed. Dickcissel tells his name. The tall weeds appear—ironweed, ragweed, goldenrod. Along the lane leading to the deep woods flocks of blue-birds go before me, touching the fence posts with bits of blue—singing—trually, trually, trually.—What dear fellows they are! How welcome their song! Never growing old—always fresh and good like the love of a true heart. At the edge of the wood the red-eyed vireo is singing—declaiming rather: "Do you hear it? Do you believe it?"

In the woods the thick foliage of gums and maples

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almost excludes the sunlight. The undergrowth is a dense tangle of darkest green. Greenbriers, pawpaws, hickory, hackberry—all woven together over mossy logs. Sharp rough grasses thrust up their blades to the sunlight—sticktight, sneezeweed, false foxglove lending a faint note of yellow to the green. Here indeed is the music and the silence.

It is not the music of birds but the music of castanets that charms here by the ravine above the river. The cottonwood keeps time to the measure of the wind, its leaves sparkling. Castanets, innumerable guitars! Now silent, the leaves motionless, now breaking forth suddenly, shaking the cool melody over the earth. Meanwhile a broad-leaved catalpa is still, the surrounding woods seeming but listeners to the cottonwood, the locust silently swaying as if to the rythm of a dance.

Elder and wild hydrangea peep above the edge of the gorge. The cricket heralds mid-summer. The homely camomile is scattered grayish-white beside the way.

The nameless weeds! Everywhere in the fields, the woods, by the roadside. Myriads whose names we do not know, each with its own place in the plan of Nature,

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its own note in the scale of color, supporting countless lives too small for the eye of man, careful by bloom, by pollen that its own kind shall not perish. What more are we who cut them down, than they, on the broad fields of God? How nameless are we save to some patient, loving heart that sought us out and called us by name?

Sometime after sunset this evening the light in the west, seen through a maple, was exquisitely beautiful; a most delicate blending of pink and pale luminous blue. The very leaves seemed to catch the colors, the tree was transfigured. Far above the light was reflected in faint orange tints on wisps of cloud.

Masses of wild sunflowers and elder by the creek and mirrored in its depths. Bob White! Bob White! sounding clear from the stubble. Young redbuds spreading diaphanous, reddish leaves by the fern-like foliage of the wild thorn. Rudbeckias, jewel weeds, bordering the new ground, blackberries ripening—so runs the varied color through this calm June day. The heat waves tremble in spirals of blue fire. Up, up mounts a hawk, his wings glistening like burnished gold in the sunlight; up, up—

now, with swift folded wings, dropping a thousand feet; now up again, screaming. Hundreds of butterflies are drifting over, high in the air. A rabbit stops before me panting, listening; then doubles silently as the tall weeds are shaken by the pursuing dog. The air is heavy with the scent of ragweed. The leaves of the corn droop, stroked by invisible fingers of heat for greater fruitfulness.

Oh, to feel the wind of the upland blow
Against my cheek—to hear the fine free song
Of the indigo-bird; to see the shadows long
Of tall oaks deepening in the sun's last glow,
And silvery mists across the fields trailed slow.

Going out of town this afternoon, with the sun and the wind at my back, there lay before me a beautiful color effect: white maples, along a woodland of elm, sycamore and other dark foliage trees, wind blown in blue-gray almost white. The maples had been planted at regular intervals, and their upturned leaves reflected the sunlight with remarkable brilliancy. The sky was ribbed withshining white; glistening in spots like a silver gauze vail. My friends the sparrows seemed to like this breezy weather that swung them so happily on pliant boughs.

The sumac is putting forth its yellow blossoms after a

night of wind and rain. The clouds break into cumuli. Above are little pools in the gray, glimpses of the calm above—the great silence. Many leaves, tossed by the wind, show their silver linings, their delicate veining.

On days like these I have often heard the finest bird song, though, as a rule, birds sing best on bright days. I shall not soon forget the song of a brown thrasher heard when clouds were gathered in purple masses overhead; when there was no gold of the sun on all the hills; when the face of Nature was sad; when the wind breathed in mid-summer the requiem of Fall. He was hidden somewhere in thick maple boughs. The joy of all glad days flowed from his throat in so tender, so triumphant a strain that for me all things were made new. It was a triumph of hope; the clear shining of the inner sunshine of love.

Yet the storm clouds, are they not beautiful for all they darken the earth and hush the great bird choir? The storm clouds of a June day rolling up from the horizon in a deep purple column—the advance guard, the "Wind Makers" marching steadily up the sky while behind come the surging, charging masses of gray. Far across the upper sky they rush furiously in detached squadrons—pass and are lost to sight—while the great infantry of the rain beats upon the earth in flash and roar.

And when the storm has passed—while yet the air is moist with the trailing nimbus—if it be near sunset what wonderful light is diffused in softest most luminous yellow over earth and sky—making the woods look gray. A strange light-apocalypse—clothing familiar things with awful beauty.

This afternoon the clouds are dark, fantastic. A rift in the west lets through a flood of orange light. Overhead the "wool pack" holds the moon dwarfed and wan. The tide of Summer begins almost imperceptibly to recede. There are brown spots on the green, the wild rose leaves are scattered, the young birds are being trained for flight. The sunsets are richer in flaming reds and yellows. Corn is "breast high;" tobacco "covers the hill;" the wheat has been threshed or is in stack. There are grassless beaches of brown cracked earth about the ponds, the creek is a chain of pools. The brown thrasher sings at rare intervals; the bluebirds seem to have slipped away as quietly as they came. Soon June will follow.

JULY.

AWN. In the east a few feathery clouds, rose-edged. There is no earth taint in this pure light-pledge of the eternal youth of Beauty. Mist covers the earth, the birds flitting up from its trembling bosom to greet the new morning. Sheep bells tinkle from hidden pastures. The wood smoke from a wayside cabin rises straight, a thin column of blue melting into the upper air. What expectancy! The strings are in perfect tune for the hand of the Master-they tremble with unexpressed harmonies. In the north a little while ago lay a long slender line of clear, dark-purple; now, as the light grows, how it changes. It is edged with gold; barred with rose; set with spikes of silver; and now it parts and the ends float away, lessening, lessening, sinking into the blue like snow flakes. The first fine needles of the sun appear; the mist is shaken; the green bosom of the earth shows here and there. Doves, black birds, mocking birds, jays, song sparrows, vireos, cardinals—all are singing, in the very rapture of harmony. "Joy! joy!" is the song; but a shrike, the butcher-bird, sits musicless and sullen near a thorn tree where his victims are

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impaled. He, too, can sing when he will, but that vision of his cruelty will ever rise before me. I cannot love his song.

The mist is gone save here and there along the woodland a silver strand is blown. So heavy is the dew the fields give forth an odor like rain-sprinkled dust. A heron flaps lazily by, a clumsy flight but steady and strong. Elder hangs thick over the fence, fragrant, heavy with dew pearls. Wild phlox and tansy nod to me between the rails.

As the sun lifts clear above the tree tops flocks of cirro-cumulus clouds gather in the west, bluish-white, glistening. By a little pool that reflects the splendor of the sky are water arum, blue lobelia, wild carots, and at the edge of the wood the painted beech.

The painted beech—handsomest of trees! To it belong the tenderest green of Spring, the clearest hues of Fall. Fine branched, its leaves ribbed daintily, its deep shade loved of mosses brown and green, of lichens blue and gray. Smooth boled, dome-like, limbs drooping, a lover of rich subdued color tones: a Dupré of the woods.

How the day changes! Beauty after beauty, cloud and sun, sunburst and shower, cumuli and nimbus. The leaves, the wild flowers, are brilliant, animated. The river—a glimpse through the trees—is blue-gray, still, mirror-like, save where dimpled with rain.

Sunset. Masses of cumuli lined with gold. How our pigments fail before the noble canvas of Nature. How dull, how hard, for all they may express of the immortal original.

It is cloudy today, but over a fertile rolling country I follow him. "Witchery, witchery, witchery," he sings to me over the nodding tops of the wild parsnips. "Witchery, witchery!" Yes, good singer, there is witchery in this happy way—blossomed and canopied with silver and blue. Yes, my golden-throated minstrel, I follow a winding path over rounded hills to a dear old bridge I know, where the water slips over the brown stones with a song as sweet as yours. Lead me all the way: sing with the creek, "Witchery, witchery, witchery!"

The meadow larks, too, lend me their songs. What do they care for the clouds trailing lower and lower? Are not the showers their friends—shall not the world be fresher when the old dust-laden sunlight gives place to the new, as pure as the breath of Dawn?

And as the first drops fall the doves are taking dust baths in the road—medicinal doubtless, which they seem to enjoy hugely—diving and fluttering where the dust lies deepest.

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Cicada strikes his strident drum. In many ravines, they lead to the river, where one stands at a sufficient elevation to have a full top view of the foliage, the perfect blending of color—the variety of form is marvelous. The bright green leaves of the red oak, needle tipped; the leaves of the scarlet oak deep lobed, delicate, lustrous; the black oak's dark green, shining like new leather underneath; the laural oak's thick, shiny unlobed. And mingling with the oaks, hickory. The broad leaves of the young hickory—the small curled leaves of the old—the tri-form leaves of the sassafras—the four pointed leaves of the tulip-tree pea-green, sparkling.

This sea of foliage touched by the wind dimples, deepens, ripples—shows gray bole here and violet deep there—with the lap of leaf on leaf as cool, as musical as the incoming of a tranquil Summer tide.

Now and again some lordly son of Kish overtops the rest—a spire-lide crest—and shakes his banner above their heads: prince, sovereign. Such a one I know—a tulip-tree, that from the top of a high hill rises a hundred and fifty feet—green, lusty—stooping a little towards the north to meet the storms, as an athlete stoops braced, with arms outstretched against the coming rush. For miles this noble tree may be seen—flower-crowned, or lifting its torch-like seed bracts. A tree of God's own

planting when the land was young: old, old, when you walked here, Audubon.

My heart said many days ago: "The bluebirds are gone." It was borrowing sorrow, for the bluebirds are not gone, they are still "shifting their load of song" along the fences. They show me the way this morning and I care not where they lead. I can trust them whithersoever they go. They are the best guides to old pleasant fields and lanes, to the old orchards, the old barns, the old-fashioned gardens. They know where the altheas, the hollyhocks, the mock-oranges, the bridal wreaths, the lilies-of-the-valley, the cockscombs, the larkspurs, the salvias, the gilly flowers grow. The weatherstained gate post with a hole in its top, they can tell me of that, and of the spring beneath the trees, the "gum" spring, deep, with the water bubbling up at its bottom through clean white sand. Yes, they know it all, they are the gentle keepers of many a treasure of memory, worthless, may be, but to the heart and to them. God keep them a haven.

The milkweed bolls are filling. Elderberries are ripe, their deep garnet clusters contrasting beautifully with the neighboring green. Poke berries are turning from white to green.

Low in the east a misty orange moon,
And in the west the last faint tinge of red,
Moonlight and twilight mingling overhead
In tender beauty that will fade too soon.
O God of Earth and Heaven grant me this boon—
That often at this hour, when I am dead,
My spirit may return and, raptured, tread
This winding hill-path where the cedars croon;
That I may feel, as I feel now, the spell,
The ecstacy, the longing and the thrill
Of mute companionship, with stream and dell,
And trees, and stars, and every heavenward hill:
And dream the dreams no mortal tongue can tell,
And speak Thy deeps that ever more are still.

The weeds by the road are covered with tiny white butterflies. I have never seen them in so dainty a bloom before. A little further on vervain offers beauty to the passer-by, nor cares if he bestow but a passing glance. The swallows are dimpling the waters of a wayside pond, dimples that widen into silvery rings, that pass out of sight in the rushes. The clouds are like white fingers outspread upon the sky. Buffoon of the woods, the yellow-breasted chat, is "showing off" to the wild sunflowers and climbing false buckwheat under a clump of

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oaks. He barks like a puppy, gobbles like a diminutive turkey, and tumbles through the air dangling his legs. "Cluck! Cluck!—sic! ittle, ittle, ittle, ittle querk!" he calls over and over again between tumbles. And then he straightens up and looks as handsome and as little given to buffoonery as one may be. Doubtless in nesting time, there is a method in his madness, but ordinarily it is pure fun, a bubbling over of spirits.

I heard a scarlet tanager sing in the rain to-day. A robin-like song, and I had the singer in plain view as he sat on a fence rail above the road. His brilliant plumage, the dark sky, the dim green of twilight impressed me as if I stood before some lovely light about to pass away forever. His song was quiet as if in keeping with the hour. "Goodnight! Farewell!" he seemed to say, and often in dreams I have heard him since, "Good night, farewell."

Thistle-down is beginning to fly, glinting above the meadows, seeking a place for the great change. And, floating like thistle-down, ballooning spiders trail their gauzy webs.

Here, not long ago, stood a majestic wood. Myriads of lifted leaves protecting violets, sweet williams, lady slippers, cardinal flowers. Often I have come here for rest, for the calm of its secret green chambers, for the welcome of its birds; now what a change. All gone! A pitiable array of stumps, of flowers broken, trodden under foot, dying. The woodland pond, once mirror of loveliness, cracked by the sun and dry. Nor is it only the utilitarian spirit but the wasteful that has been here. A prodigal land, a prodigal people. The fire, the axe, because there is enough and to spare. A sweeping destruction! God's trees cut down, and about the unshaded roof-tree saplings planted without nurture, with no thought of beauty. Yet Beauty will take thought of herself. The best will be made of all that remains. Flowers will grow again, lustier in the sun. Here will shine the timothy, the pink and white clover, the lustrous corn. The spirit of the trees will be here in blossoming orchards, in waving grain.

The rippling low laughter of corn, beloved of the sun and the showers;

The silver-winged clouds that are borne to where the rose sunset flowers;

The beauty that lies on the wheat; the perfume the meadow distils;

A voice, unspeakably sweet, that calls from the far blue hills.

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- The bells of the song-sparrows rung, the flutes of the meadowlarks blown;
- Green walls of a brook overhung with elder, whose fragrance is sown—
- Whose fragrance is sown on the breeze, to loiter and linger and fail
- In the depths of the billowy trees at the feet of the bitter-sweet pale.

AUGUST.

SINCE I was last in the fields July has passed away, but here there seems no sorrow for the passing. The indigo-bird is singing joyfully; the road is bordered with "life everlasting."

I called on my friends the bank swallows to-day and found them at home in a sandy cliff overlooking the river. Handsome, dapper fellows who will stay here long enough to see the yellowing golden-rod and then away South.

Quiet falls and Halcyon is here—now a noisy fellow, breaking silence with his loud rattle, sitting on a dead limb at the edge of the ravine. I am very fond of this bold, handsome fisher, verily a kingfisher with his royal crest and robes. And bearer, too, of real halcyon days, when by a peace-loving stream I kept tryst with dreams—where life was a Summer cloud restful in the blue, and trade a thing forgotten, unneeded, its curse removed. Dear harvest-home days, when into the granary of my soul was brought a harvest of beauty: when the sun, the stars, the clouds, my harvesters, sang to me their harvest song.

From far away comes to me now the song of the vireo—dearest of woodland singers, who sings his sweetest while the sunshine drips through the leaves after a shower. Reed notes with that liquid quality impossible to reproduce. No song is more artless. It seems to bubble up from his throat apparently without beginning or end. I have sat for an hour, at the foot of a tall tree, in the freshness and quiet of the forest just to watch his little body high in the branches above, to hear his song dropping down to me like golden raindrops breeze-shaken from dewy leaves. A true follower of Pan is he—a voice of the deep, green woods.

Yellow and white butterfles flit before me as I turn from the river and take the winding road leading into the hills. From a "heaven" tree overhead "Cuh—cuh—cuh," calls the cuckoo—the "raincrow" and I see his long slate-colored body moving silently among the topmost branches. How like a spirit he comes and goes.

The way leads me around the hillside where water tinkles down the rocks, and mingled with the sound, at regular intervals, the monotonous cry of the wood peewee. "Pee-we-e, pee-we-e,"—a plaintive call that would weary one were it not for the wonderful music with which Nature accompanies all her singers, bringing out in each voice the perfect measure of its own beauty—so that at the end of the day the true listener feels that

no singer could have been spared. Just now the peewee's song is accompanied not only by the tinkling water but by the whistling wings of a dove in its swift passage, and by the liesurely flap flap of a flicker high in the air. And withal the wind touches the leaves to whispering harmony.

And as for color—well there is redwing this moment come over the hilltop with a song of the meadow. A short song but never to me a harsh one. What a fine fellow, to be sure, with his uniform on—his glossy black, his red epauletts. A color bearer of June at his best when the timothy is in bloom and the first sheaves of wheat are garnered:

When June, a wild rose in her hair, Sows all sweet odors in the air.

About me, as I pause to watch the redwing, floats a delicious perfume, wafted from the locusts on the hill that are yet fragrant with the memory of a bloom long gone. A cool, delicate scent very grateful. It is a charming grove, the locusts fringed with elms whose mid-summer tips appear, their tender green contrasting exquisitely with the lustier green of older foliage.

I pluck a handful of toad-flax and go up to the grove. A wood-thrush waits me. How modest he is, yet how

perfectly at ease as he eyes me pleasantly. A noted singer without any airs. His singing time is now past; but on the slopes of Spring how few surpass him.

What charm there is in a winding road! The road I have come to-day winds with ever-increasing ascent among the hills. And now that I have reached the summit of a dividing ridge I can look back on a way of peaceful beauty, along which yellow flags nod, and brightening vervain. Far in the south are low, blue hills. The sun has just set. In the east an indigocolored storm cloud with fringed edges overhangs the flat woods. A long belt of cumulus of lighter blue binds the horizon, and behind this belt, taller cumuli, rosebright. Above, through breaks in the wool-pack, deeps of violet, touched with the pink of the afterglow. All wonderfully rich in color.

Here at the edge of a little pond I notice one of those charming bits of color one so often meets in the woods and fields. A silver cluster of thistles against a background of tall magenta ironweed, the picture reflected faithfully in the clear waters.

In the treetops is the *chick! chick!* of blackbirds—a note of Spring. There is something refreshing and cheering in this familiar call and the sudden flight of these

birds from tall boughs. The world is made younger, the buds stir in their long sleep if the blackbirds but go trooping by in long-linked irridescence. Here in sober August they have touched the chords of April. So Nature would keep us in mind of her varied music, as a friend brings out and sings to us a song we love but had partly forgotten.

"Tap, tap, tap." Do you hear him? Can you find him there among the leaves? On some dead limb he is playing his wholesome march, but we can only guess, as we peer about, whether he wears red and black, or red, white and black, or golden yellow, there behind his dense screen. Nevertheless, we know him for a minstrel good and true; a stay-at-home through Winter months when all other singers have fled away South. Joy be his lot!

The wind—how his tapping marks its melody! The melody of the wind that fills the soul with inexpressible longing; that year in, year out, has been breathed upon the earth, now in dim aisles of beauty, now through the glad arches of Summer ways—and that shall continue forever.

The tall lobelia is in bloom, a dainty bit of blue at the edge of the ravine.

Back toward the hills a coffee-bean tree is set with fine effect against a background of maples, its long branches of compound leaves outlined in sap-green against catalpas and hackberries. It seems as if for a moment Nature had given thought to a landscape gardener: yet only for a moment. A greater artist than man is here.

Born acrobats, a couple of nut-hatches are running up and down a large black walnut. Heads up or heads down, or walking on the underside of a limb like flies—it is all one to them. "Hank, hank, quank hank!" they call. Clowns of the green tent of the woods, life is not a sad affair at all for them here, where the sun flashes through the trees, here with the hum of the bees in a linden.

There is a lane I know—I call it Song Lane because my birds come there to feast on the wild cherries that border it, to sing their sweetest songs.

There, on the top of a rail, the great flycatcher loves to sit, his meditations interspersed with graceful springs as he takes many a dainty bit from the air. I am glad he ignores me to-day as I watch the little quail running across the quiet road for cover in the high goldenrod that is brightening in color for the Fall pageant.

The last of the season's blackberries—a few sprays hanging over the fence. The black-eyed susans are

still clothed in gay orange and black. Bumblebees cling to the blossoms of the false dragon head.

Among the bright wings of the roadside none are brighter than those of the mailed dragon fly—the "snake doctor" of boyhood days who was always busy visiting his ugly and venomous patients. What a libel on such a handsome and harmless fellow! Here he darts close about me as if to assure me that he is really a knight, good and valorous, ready to tilt down a sunbeam for the heart of a rose—"There, admire me!" he says, as he pauses for an instant on the tip of a weed.

The evening primrose gladdens the fence side. What fragance—what color. Not only at twilight but in the cool dewy mornings it makes pleasant the way.

Fall creeping on. A rainy day with that indefinable touch of sadness our hearts know so well.

The sun shines dimly to-day after the rain. Scarf clouds are trailed across the sky. The foxtail grass is a clear yellow. Fields of ragweed stretch away to fields of tasseled corn. A solitary pecan tree rises dark and prophet-like against the sky.

And now all the west is lit with a glorious cloud-

scape. Deep violet, fiery orange, pale gold, malachite green, blended and glowing above the bowed, the silent earth.

This morning, as I go afield, among the first to greet me is my dear little friend, the goldfinch, singing as he comes his undulating way that cheery song of his which surely must make hearts happier. To see him, in his golden coat, on a thistle top, is worth going miles, and to lie in the meadow when he flies over is one of the most precious of all dream times.

The goldenrods are taking on more color. Here is one above the creek very yellow, and as bright in the water beneath it, that is set round with fringing willows and wild sweet potato vines.

Near this place is a decaying walnut whose trunk is covered by a Virginia creeper in very charming fashion, illustrating a lusty, a tender trait of Nature. For if vines in wantonness pull down the strong they oftener clothe the naked and the dying in garments of living beauty.

By that vagary of fancy which controls oftentimes one's feet and leads them where it will, I am led along a road, this afternoon, that is bordered on one side with trees and on the other by low-lying tobacco fields over which waves of heat shimmer. There are lilac shadows in the coves and vistas of the distant wood, but at my feet on the green grass the shadow color is lost. I hear the wood pewee again. There are Fall leaves on the black gums and sassafras. The tobacco fields are blue-green. The clouds, with their bases lost in mist, gleam like sunlit snow. In the quiet I can hear the sigh of a falling leaf, a passing unit in the great sum of beauty. A warbler sings somewhere in the woods beyond. I follow but he eludes me, yet in following I have found full flowered clumps of Joe Pye weed.

Skullcaps bloom at the wood's edge. The sumac balls are reddish lavender. Wood smoke drifts across fallow lands in long scarfs of bluish-gray. The old charm of the pastoral life is come again. How good is the smell of the smoke!

The sun sets red—above it a gleaming thread of red gold.

Night. Starlight and the dusky trees and the song of the white crickets. There are two distinct choruses answering one another—with katydids and brown crickets chiming in at regular intervals. In the darkness here, the weeds and grasses are alive with song. There, above, silence—a great violet space through which the stars shine.

Boneset whitens. About me the jays chatter shrilly, now and again uttering their peculiar musical notes—their love notes it would seem, as grateful to the ear as their plumage is to the eye. Where the soil is thinnest there are many color hints of Fall—a red leaf on the maple, a golden on the walnut. The days are brooding on the change.

I am in Song Lane again. The birds are thick in the wild cherry trees, but the sun puts an aura about my glasses, and my songsters are all clothed in rainbow colors, so that I cannot see them in their own plumage as I would like. On one side a tall untrimmed osage hedge makes an ideal place for the birds to nest and roost. Here under the shade of overhanging boughs one may watch, if very quiet, the home manners of many a shy fellow, and hear a number of love secrets.

Mullein and pennyroyal encroach on the beaten ways. The boneset is in full blossom, calling with wholesome fragrance for the bees. Boneset loves the fence corners and the edge of wet woods—the wet woods where sweet-gums grow, shooting up straight and slender, graceful boles, columns of stately beauty in God's temple. And beautifully the sun strikes through these temples, lighting a column here and there, touching the leafy arches with changeful color.

The glory of the morning! The black gum, herald of Fall, flashes through the green. In the east the blue is flecked with luminous white clouds that are doubtless the cool tents of the spirits of Dawn.

It is a time of bubbling over of song. Even the wood pewee almost ceases to drawl: is quickened into rapture among the goldening boughs.

I heard this afternoon the long-billed marsh wren, in a little brake of green where I sat listening to chewink, the level sunbeams glistening on his coat. But the song I shall never forget—that I never heard before—was the song of the Carolina wren. Through a fringe of sprouts he looked out at me—I could have touched him with my hand—and then he rang his tiny bell, so silvery, so true—a call to the fairies, a cadenza of dewdrops for the heart of Silence.





Gray Trees who Love the Folded Hills.

SEPTEMBER.

Gray trees, that love the folded hills,
For whom the seasons hold
The tender green, the lusty green,
The varying red and gold—
To whom the stars are friends, and rills,
And voices of the night,
Who raptured see Dawn's mystery
And miracle of light:

O hear me as I come to you
From yonder toil and smoke,
And make me free as you are free
Who wear no badge nor yoke—
Who to the soul of Beauty true
Wait for the touch of Fall;
The chill, the haze, the leafless days—
The hand that quiets all.

The moss is green about your feet,
With beauty you are crowned;
The sunlight weaves thro' falling leaves
A glory all around:
The paths that lead to you are sweet
With wholesome scents and wild,—
O make me free as you are free,
As strong, as undefiled.

I stand beside you, far above
The white clouds loiter slow—
Your branches lie against the sky
In netted gray and glow;
Your long, still shadows eastward move,
With mist each hollow fills,
A vesper calls, and twilight falls
Upon the folded hills.

The stars come out, I see them gleam
Far in the purple deep;
Your flocks are they who gently stray
Thro' pleasant vales of sleep,
While you keep watch with many a dream,
O good gray shepherd trees,
All silence clad and seeming sad
With sacred memories.

Nature, like a master colorist, so blends them that there is no sharp line of distinction. The warm tones of Fall follow the cool tones of Summer as harmoniously as tints are blended in the evening or the morning skies. Nature is not at all concerned about our yesterdays or tomorrows. She knows only one eternal Present.

The hedges are gay with beggar ticks, pink knotweed, azuratum. The sky is cloudless, the wind comes with that strange yet winning message from a far-away land. The tap, tap of a woodpecker is heard. The "redhead" of the clearing. What bird is more constant than he? Which one of them all has a better, a truer message? No matter if skies be dark or bright he has a cheery word, he beats a tonic drum. Though all should go, he stays, he changes not. Type of good homely things, of plain living, of daily hope and joy.

Goldenrod, elder loaded with berries, and garget cover the woods and fields. How tall the weeds are grown, each with its harvest of seed. Over the fences and bushes the clematis, "old man's beard," is flowing in silver floss. The yellow bellied fly catcher is taking a meal under a dense shade of gum and oak, darting down and returning to his bough with a flutter. Close by is a deserted plant bed thick with pink-and-white blossoms of tobacco. A beautiful growth is the climbing false buckwheat that grows in great profusion here, blending its dainty green with the garnet of the pokeberry.

The tobacco fields are bordered with sneeze weed and marigold. This way leads me to the great "flat" woods, the home of the cardinal flower, where in dim aisles the underbrush is a tangled mass of spicewood and hazel cut by narrow slashes of marsh grass.

The elms and shell-bark hickories here are magnificent. Century giants hale as October.

Coming along the lane leading from the flat woods, my eye caught instantly the vivid blue of the shadows on a weather beaten board fence,—I had never seen shadows so blue before. The declining sun hung low over a bordering hill and atmospheric conditions were just at their best for a perfect exhibition of complementary light.

There is no color but the pure gold of sunset this afternoon. No clouds, and in the east near the horizon deep lilac, and above, parallel bars of pink blend with the pale lilac of the upper sky. A great calm has fallen on the fields.

All along the way the golden-green tobacco is being housed, the winding tracks of the busy wagons glistening—gossamers of toil. Chewink is still here with his song of high places. The spice wood has put on its red berries.

I never know half of the beauty of a tree until I lie beneath it.

A quiet September day—the fields linked in a chain of golden gossamers. The Summer birds are departing. Here in the woods I hear only the woodpecker and the flicker.

What a change in two weeks! Then but a few clumps of golden rod were yellow, and the evening primrose was in full bloom with wild morning glories clambering over it, now the primroses are almost gone, the creek banks are starred with marigolds. The clover blossoms are faded, but in their stead has come a new beauty—a

beauty of reddening sumac leaves. The milk weed bolls are opening, loosing their argosies of silver.

Insects furnish the music now with only an occasional bird note.

The moon is near its full and a short while before sundown hangs white over the woods. One of the loveliest of all Nature's hours is this of mingled sunlight and moonlight. When the west is faint rose, and the east is clear lilac, when the two lights meet and blend in the upper sky.

Wild sunflowers still shine like golden stars in the damp woods. Late as it is bumble bees fly past laden with pollen.

Nature gives new beauty day by day on through the round of years. Endless variety, no two stars, no two sunsets alike. This evening there is a pale-blue sky with light golden clouds shading upward into purple, and downward into flame color at the horizon. Color after color taking on new shades, changing so rapidly that the eye scarce delights in one ere another is there, passing from warm and vivid light into calm violet and at last, with one white star, into the full glory of night. And as the light fades, the river shines tranquilly through the trees a mirror of silver.

To-day I have taken to the river. The reflections how beautiful! Deep waving green in the still water, with the sun low in the west. The water falling white from the wheel of a passing steamer is changed to lilac. The waves roll in as if they were oiled, each wave presenting a facet of golden light and shadow. A long smokestack in reflection seems broken into a hundred pieces, and the sun, smiting a window-pane on the eastern shore, falls, a spiral of gold, in the wrinkled water.

On one side of a little island, where the water is still and the willows thick, two cranes watch noiselessly.

As the sun sinks lower the waves take on a deeper purple that is broken, on the beach, into clear green fringed with white. Fantastic scarf clouds wave over the sun. And now the afterglow—sky and river flooded with intense carmine.

Dear trees, this voice that speaks to you and me While all about us lies the mist of Fall, Shall not we sometime know its mystery— The meaning of its call?

Perhaps, even now, you in your robes so bright.
You—lifted up and looking far away—
May see the glow of some diviner light
Crowning the coming day.

List, hear you not? The milkweed down is blown As by a Spirit's breath—what draws so near That on my soul its shadow now is thrown— A rapture and a fear? Who will say when all the birds are flown South? Yesterday when the sky was gray I thought they were gone; but to-day the primrose is in bloom, the robin is still here. In these periodical flittings there are always loiterers who are loth to leave even when there comes a touch of frost, and the scarlet and gold of Fall takes the place of Summer's green. Blessed be these loiterers, and sad is the day when they, too, leave and the woods are still.

OCTOBER.

Now on the tepees of the corn the smoke
Lies lilac-blue—a veil of tender haze
Softening the landscape of these mellow days
Of yellowing poplar and of reddening oak.
Thus came the season—the Great Spirit woke
From dreams untroubled and behold the maize
Was heaped within his lodge, his people's praise,
And full of love He unto them thus spoke:
"In every year forever there shall be—
What time the nuts fall and the oak is red—
A season dreamy—holy unto me,
In which the sweet smoke of my peace-pipe shed
Upon the earth shall hallow it, and give
Peace, joy, and plenty—that the world may live."

MAGIC colors are in the woods. Some of the oaks are a rich glossy green, others red and scarlet. The leaves of the gum are a light clear red mingled with tints of yellow.—I hear the hoot of a horned owl in the distance a lonely call that the negroes interpret aptly—"Chick-er-a—goose—goose—goose!"

The hedges are full of sparrows, that go in flocks now—vesper, fox, black-faced, white headed—and with them, leading the way, a cardinal.

The corn is in shock—row after row of wigwams where the warriors of Summer rest—their shining harness



What time the nuts fall and the oak is red.



put off forever. The sky is a dark blue-gray, and the only wings I can see high against it are those of the sparrow-hawk graceful and swift—whose shadow is as the shadow of death to all the little earth-loving birds now hidden in thickets and tall weeds.

The ragweeds are a cold purple, thick on the stubble fields, and of such even height that the hills covered with them appear, at a little distance, as if fallowed and harrowed. In the hollows and around the edges of the fields glow charming bits of color. The maroon of the young sweetgums—the scarlet of young sassafras. Color that handled by man might look harsh or garish, seen through this hazy atmosphere is wonderfully soft, yet brilliant.

The acorns begin to fall, pattering in quick showers when the wind comes by. The air has a frosty taste. There are many red and yellow leaves, and gossamers twinkle with a new light. The eddying leaves settle in snug little hollows, or heap themselves in brier thickets, as if forewarned of bitter days to come. Life everlasting sparkles in pure fragrance on the hillside.

Life Everlasting! All along the way we look for it, led on by its strange, imperishable perfume; some day shall we not find it on God's hills?

Flocks of blackbirds are flying west beneath a cold, cloudy sky. This evening I noticed a very remarkable display of sunset colors. Above me were dull gray clouds. Then suddenly, two maples, not over fifty feet away were lighted in their tops with a clear, bright orange, as if the upper boughs of the trees were in full Fall dress. Some tall oaks were also brightened in the same manner, but not so beautifully as the maples. Far off a clump of trees, through a vista of red maples, was aflame with this unusual light. The sun could not be seen, but as the light in the trees faded, overhead shone pink and violet bars bending to the horizon.

The wind is from frostland, but I hear a robin piping a rather feeble strain. Song Lane holds now but a serene memory of those who sang there.

About a mile beyond Song Lane there is a knoll that overlooks the surrounding country; where the ground falls gently away in fallow land and meadow. It is a place I love, a breezy haunt of birds. Wild cherry trees crown it, but now the leaves have drifted from them as if following the birds, and my heart follows too.

How lovely are the shadows slipping eastward over the fallow ground! Noiseless couriers that go before the stars and the dawn—now clad in purple, now in yellow, now in green as they cross the fields of ragweed and of new-sown wheat.

And from this place how the wide horizon opens new scenes—vaster distances that make for enchantment. Here at dusk come the vesper sparrow to send out over the fields a hymn of thankfulness, an angelus of peace. Here often my heart has been lifted up by visions of the borderland—the meeting of earth and sky—by a voice: "Enter into rest."

Chewink sang again this afternoon, and I should love him the more because he stays so long with me and comes again so early in the Spring.

O great flower of light! The meanest weed that grows seems now to share in the splendor of the sun. Gossamers bear his golden words far across the hills.

Dusk has fallen, and the oaks have clothed themselves in mystery. A bat weaves strange circles about them.

This afternoon was surpassingly beautiful. There were no clouds, but after the sun had fallen, bright orange light filled the west—brightest near the horizon and shading

up into pale blue, through which shone a star of the first magnitude shaking with crystal light. The orange gradually gave place to red that blended into violet—the star gaining in brilliancy and deepening in color, and the bluegray river mirroring and softening all.

The ring of the axe! How fast the woods are being burned and cut away! Slaughter without mercy, as strong men slay weaker men—somewhat because they must, largely because they can. The flowers spring up at the appointed season, the birds return, but a noble tree once gone comes no more. The birds return? No, soon the warblers will not return, for their woodland homes shall have been destroyed. Here the lanes, even, in many places have been stripped of their trees that a few more rows of tobacco and corn may grow.

But there is a wood I know that so far has escaped this vandalism, a wood almost untouched by the hand of man, where wild things grow in thick underbrush, hazel, wild spice, wahoo, pawpaw, bitter-sweet, button-bush, sumac, and countless more of Nature's untutored children.

Thither my feet tend to-day, a calm, sparkling day after a week of rain. There was a heavy frost this morning. The air is full of its delicious flavor, mingled with a whiff of cedar as I pass a grove on the way. The woodpeckers chatter incessantly, flying along the fence. tapping their welcome. The tall grass, russet green, is clothed in frost crystals. The dogwoods are loaded with scarlet berries. The swamp holly lights the way with many a ruddy torch. The sky is blue and lavender. The poison ivy flames in the trees russet-red and scarlet. The paths are overhung with boneset and pokeweed. All little shrubs stand out glowing in color, challenging attention. One tulip tree that I admire particularly is a rich yellow-green threaded with deep wine-red that I at first thought was one of Nature's color whims in which she sometimes stains a leaf yellow, and a sister leaf on the same bough red, but on looking closer I found that the wine-red came from a spray of poison ivy that had won its way to the very top of the tree and thence leaped out like a tongue of flame. The wild grape also is especially brilliant in color. A fine clear red that the sun makes almost luminous.

Ah, to spend such a day in the woods. A do-nothing day under the trees, with a canopy of shifting light and color, a bed of fragrant leaves. To watch the jay, the cardinal, the red-headed woodpecker, the flicker—such constant and cheery friends who weave their joyfulness into the woods, and fill it with delightful music. And the taste of a sassafrass twig, how sweet! The tinkle of

a half-hid stream, what melody! My soul, as I sit here, keeps repeating Stevenson's lines—

"Here let me lie, Under the wide and starry sky."

The wideness of it! The glory of it! The thrill of it! The longing, the longing!

I have walked in the great hills to-day and found them clothed in shining red and orange. The little clumps of sassafras were dripping color; splashes of it on the fields of ragweed, along the fence rows, in the tobacco fields.

Wintry looking. Clouds with deep streaks of orange in the west. The willows are almost bare of leaves. Flocks of doves whistle swiftly by, going to roost. Ghosts of goldenrod haunt the creek. A lonely tree waits by the road. What are its thoughts on the marge of the wide, deep night.

A windy day, the sky covered with clouds that drift ceaselessly, the prevailing color tones gray and violet. The wind roars through the oaks, hickories, maples, ash. I see the tops of tall oaks rocking in the blast while the roaring draws nearer and nearer until the trees close at hand take it up and send down whirling showers of leaves. The hickories are a fine old gold. In the flats that lie across the meadow there are rich notes of red and saffron in the sweetgums. A leaf dances before the wind like another dazzling Herodias. Bars of light fall obliquely through the clouds and spread fan-like over the fields. What pictures they suggest of the far east, these "Wings of the Morning!"

As I come up the road there is a sudden burst of sunshine from the western sky and the clouds in the north, seen through a depression in the road, change into beautiful indigo-blue. The wind blows chilly, but in the treetops sporting with the wind is a flock of black birds. How pleasant in their chatter! How like pan pipes their liquid notes. A major of Spring running through the minor of the passing year. The pond is rumpled gray. The winged elm is dashed with gold. The broomsedge makes patches of brownish-yellow on the hillside.

Led by a choir of blackbirds, 'neath a sky Of rose and violet, October goes.

NOVEMBER.

"Humility like darkness reveals the heavenly lights. God will see that you do not want society."

RAIN and drifting leaves. Leaves that dance in rows—that lie limp and still.

Exquisite colors may often be seen, on a crisp morning, in the steam, as it rises spreading like a geyser: pinkish-purple and lavender. The ever changing curling column suggests the very spirit of liberty, of beauty. Expanding, drifting away under a pale blue sky of serene loveliness.

How fresh, how genuine are the Fall grasses—how grateful after an artificially heated room or the perfume of a hot house flower.

What is more charming than a walk, down a winding way, in the Fall? Through the wood that is so unmindful of the garrulous world.—Through the rustling leaves—every turn revealing new color, new vistas under

the uplifted boughs. One such day I shall never forget. The sky was crowded with shining hosts—golden wing on golden wing—a multitude no man could number. The forest was rapt—expectant—as if God were near. It seemed to me as if all heaven and earth were chanting low, reverently: "Holy—Holy—Holy!"

A gray day—with rain. The last aster—the last evening primrose—the last bird note—whispers the wind.

The tide has turned back. Swarms of gnats hang over the road. Wild beans peep at me through the fence; *they* have kept a blossom. Primroses, too, mock me—the frost has *not* driven them all away.

The river is low. Cicada, the last of his tribe, beats a stridulous drum. Across the still river lies the sun's fiery splendor. A skiff rowed slowly up stream leaves a narrow, silver wake. As the sun nears the horizon purple tints appear in the water; the path of the sun deepens in color, grows broader. The mist rises in the far corn fields and spreads like a great lake half seen through broken woodlands. The sun is dimmed by an almost imperceptible haze. Crossing the path of the sun obliquely a boat changes the still brightness into rippling gold. The purple deepens with one delicate streak of greenish tint running out from the shore half way across the

stream. Below the sun there is reddish purple. Clouds appear above, golden, as if illumined from within, stretching level across the horizon. The purple fades, the silvery streaks have almost disappeared. The lower disc of the sun is darkened and two bands of dark cloud almost meet above it. The overlying clouds grow lighter, the sky above is pale blue. Wind ripples appear on the water and with the ripples the greenish streaks circling and broadening. The sun sinks beamless, red. A leafless sycamore is outlined white against the sky. Slowly, slowly, the sun sinks, suffusing the horizon above it with carmine. The clouds catch the afterglow. The moon rises above the trees gathering light.

The primroses are still laughing at me from sheltered places. I have noticed that on cool dewy mornings the primroses are just as beautiful as at nightfall, and that their blossoms open to the moth of day as well as to the moth of night. Their flowers are even fresher and more fragrant in the morning, and they often continue open until mid-day.

Dusk-clothed the day went softly by—
I heard the cedar's whispering croon,
And I saw, at the rim of a rose-lit sky,
The yellow blossom of the moon.

Coming into the field this morning I surprised a hawk at his breakfast. He flew like a flash over the woods and dropped out of sight. Lightness, grace, strength! A much slandered fellow, too, by all who love to be killing.

The tobacco is housed, and I sit on the deserted skids where it was hung for a while to yellow. The crickets chirp incessantly. A crow flies far overhead cawing. The corn that is left standing is all in ragged regimentals. The sumacs are still a blaze of color—scarlet, garnet, crimson. Before the nearing brier-hook they say: "We who are about to die salute you!"

Late this afternoon I heard a screech-owl. As Thoreau says, he was wailing, "Oh, that I had never been born!"
"Oh, that I had never been born!"

How still the woods are—mute beneath the hand of Fall. Are they not listening to the spirit voice of the lark from the far fields?

The smell of the rotting leaves. How small seem the sermons of men in this thought of a day that is dead.

About five o'clock this afternoon, as I went afield after a day spent with the master melodists of the mind—Tennyson, Emerson, Lanier—I heard the song-sparrow. He, too, is a master melodist. A lyrist of dewy, of sunparched, of November fields. And at sunset I heard his companion, the vesper-sparrow—a gentler poet whom Christ would have loved had He walked through this twilight land. Ah, that far away time—or is it?—is He "nearer than I think?"

These rainy days of November, when the rain is like a mist watering the face of the earth, when the bowed and broken weeds wait like mourners for one who loves them to speak a word of cheer, of hope, to lay his hands upon their heads, to meditate in sympathy with them on the change that has come, the death of the flowers, the departure of the birds, the waning of the strength of the sun; these rainy days, are they not the fallow days of the heart when much seed is sown, for an awakening by and by? Do we not sit at the feet of many a Master we had long neglected, and think on things it is not well to forget? Perchance we may learn better how to "sell our clothes and keep our thoughts." Perhaps we shall drink deeper of the well of Kindliness; know more of the voices and of the silence. Or going afield it may be

we shall see that the "dull, dreary days" are not so dreary after all. That Beauty loves a gray day. That joy is immortal, and learn of Him who loves the sparrows that are sold for a farthing.

The bright colors have passed from wood and field, the sky-line of the forest is now no longer rounded into domes, but is broken into spires here and there, into bare limbs tossed aloft, into a fringe of slender boughs and interlacing twigs.

The landscapes are hazier in the distance, but closer, form is dominant over grays and browns.

The crows in long, dark chains swing over the field.— Near nightfall I have seen hundreds of them flying toward the hills above the river where for years they have roosted. Out of the haze they come as if by magic troubling the quiet with their cawing.

Sometime ago the weedy strings on which the grass-hoppers and white crickets play were broken and their music ceased—but not so with the brown cricket. He is a musician of Winter bringing in, if we invite him, the good cheer of out-of-doors to the hearth stone, the

cheerup of a life that is not daunted by simple living.—
Give him a wood fire, he likes the smell of oak and hickory—and he will tell how the woods whisper at night—how the stars talk to one another—how the birds plant and gather in their harvest, and how not to trouble oneself much about new things, "whether of clothes or friends."

The cattle wait at the gate. The world is red with the camp fires of the army of the sun.

How may I know a tree? As I would know a true friend, by communion heart to heart. How may I know its message? By lying at its feet.

Gray trees that love the twilight land, Of night so unafraid—
What rest shall be, what peace for me The night when I am dead?
So calm, so prohet-like you stand Here while the glory pales—
What lies before—what brighter shore When this good sunlight fails?

The clouds like crimson torches burn High in the eastern blue—
The afterglow that passes slow
In many a radiant hue.
And unto it my soul doth turn,
Doth fearless voyage on—
This holy light above the night
Shall pledge me of the dawn.

DECEMBER.

THE first snowfall. It has been so long since the little flakes visited the earth they are doubtful of a welcome even by the sparrows who sit on the fence with heads cocked to one side in a very knowing way. One—two—three—what are you waiting for, nestlings? 'Tis a long, long time you were away, and the bosom of our mother yearns for you. Faster, faster! now you come merrily. The sparrows are glad after all and so am I, though none of us are as glad as the Great Mother. She has much to tell you, as you lie close to her heart, secrets for you and her only, secrets as deep as life and death. Of how you may make the wheat grow and fill the great cisterns in the silent places.

The ragweed fields are changing from dull purple to white as they catch the feathers of the snow. A broomgrass clump near at hand is like the plume of Navarre. The cornfields are tawny and dun. The woods look almost black against the horizon.

I stand on a high hill and watch the snowfall. I can see over an area of seven or eight miles, and I never looked on a quieter scene. The farm houses are white:

the curling smoke only, telling of life within. The corn shocks are like the deserted tents of a great army.

In so holy an hour who can measure the ebb and flow of thought, of emotions, in the soul as it stands in the presence chamber of Nature and waits on the footfall of the Great Power. Not in the sensuousness of Summer, not in the pageantry of Fall, not in the passion of Spring, shall one see as in the stillness of the white earth the Spirit that moves in all. Here are met Life and Death—the light and the shadow—marvelous two who wait upon the Unseen. Here the Voice is clearer, the Silence deeper. And what we know and what we know not are blended softly into—*We wait*. But I hear at my feet the sigh of a dropping flake.

Leaving the hilltops I am come into a deep, cozy hollow where the accumulated leaves of all the foregoing years are gathered, and where the moss is thick on the roots of oaks and elms. In such a place, with the thought of all gathered here, the innumerable dead, one might wish to fall asleep as have fallen the leaves.

Peace reigns here. A gray squirrel sits motionless watching me. Why should he be afraid? Seen through the branches he was but a part of the gray lichens that cover the tree trunk. Certainly he has a lovely home! May only friends go that way.

The meadowlark is with me, his breast brighter for

the snow, his song dearer because he knows the borderland and the dreams that come there.

The snow has passed. It is mild and Spring-like, with the cardinal singing. How he lures me with his song to follow through the thickets, to lean on Quiet that he may come near.

The fields are smoky. All around the horizon lie heavy clouds. The sun sets red through the oak wood; countless twigs are traced against the sky; some fine and lace-like, others feathery. One of the greatest beauties of Winter is this twig tracery at dawn or at sunset. We know but part of the beauty of a tree until we see it unclothed.

And there is something strangely soothing in the voices of the trees heard on a Winter's day in the midst of a deep wood. How poor seem the words of men when these century sages speak. What wisdom they teach of simple living, of simple faith. But they are silent for all who cannot understand.

Sunshiny, with the woodpeckers calling—who that loves them can stay in-doors. Over the hill they call to

where the leaves are crisp in the hollows, to where the purple berries of the greenbrier hang in clusters and the air is sweet as old wine.

> I thought as I looked on the winding creek, Clear amber rippling on thro' snow, Here is the beauty my soul doth seek— This is the grace my heart would know.

This is the writing forever new; God is here in this happy stream; God is here, as there in the blue— Here He tells of a lovely dream.

There is a hill, up which the road winds in gradual ascent, that overlooks a great expanse of flat country where all through the Winter the cornstalks stand fluttering their faded finery in the wind. Far away is the river, steel-blue through the leafless trees. Patches of Winter wheat pencilled green, patches of broom-grass brownish-yellow, dash the scene with color. One evening, near nightfall, I sat there and saw the mists rising to meet the darkness. First a slender white arm up-raised encircling the wood on the western horizon; then, one by one, gray tentacles thrust up while the dusk pressed them down; then a weight of darkness that seemed to fall suddenly: chill, silence, a star.

The rabbit-hawk, as he is called here, may often be seen in these December days, circling in broad spirals or hovering over some brier or broom-grass patch. His wings have almost the reach of an eagle's: he is the very embodiment of grace and strength: fierce-eyed as a buccaneer. But I have seen him with the crows on his back in most ignominious flight, dodging this way and that, while his pursuers kept up a great racket, calling their fellows to the chase. Once I remember to have seen him in a fence corner with several crows about He had backed up against the rails and they were him. having a rough-and-tumble fight when the breaking of a twig under my foot startled them and sent them swiftly away. The hawk was doubtless glad of the interruption, but the crows were evidently brave in numbers and were making the feathers fly.

I have seen this hawk, too, driven off the field by kingbirds—a pair swooping down and striking him repeatedly until he found shelter in the woods.

To-day I have seen the woods from my window through a blur of rain. I have taken down my Audubon, I have been thinking of his life here. Of the mill whose foundation timbers partly remain, of the bitter grind it was to him whose free spirit could not be

confined long within walls, of his struggle here in the face of bitter poverty and misunderstanding. What he accomplished is a continual marvel. How delightful is his enthusiasm over his drawing of the Kingfisher, his first real drawing from Nature. "When I saw the living birds," he says, "I felt the blood rush to my temples, and almost in despair spent about a month without drawing."

The old men who remember him, as he was in Henderson, are all gone. He was to them a kindly enigma. He could not make money, he was a non-conformist. He had a passion for the woods and fields, not as a hunter, they could understand a hunter; but as an interpreter, an artist, a poet, that they could neither understand, nor, if it took him much from home, forgive. He is yet but a name to hundreds here, but the heart that understands, and the trees, and the hills, will never forget.

O holy hour, nor day, nor yet the night, But beauty of their meeting past all speech.

Twilight. The red sun has slipped through the trees beamless. Just at the zenith there is a streak of luminous cloud. The wind rustles the dead leaves. A song of minor strain is blown from the lane. A sparrow flutters by and dives into the hedge with a silvery good

night. A rail fence topping the hill is drawn in broken lines against the sky. A great lonesomeness seems to have fallen on the fields—a spirit of sadness. My heart tells the rosary of its longings.

What a cheery fellow is the little downy woodpecker! A drummer who in the morning—when frost sparkles—when the heart beats strong—when hope is high—taps, taps, taps the onward measure to better living, to higher deeds. I want no brighter companion for a Winter walk.

Far in the deep of the night
When the curved moon is low
Cheered by an inner light
Over the hills I go.—

Out where the tall gray trees
Hold to me welcoming arms,
And, wrapped in mysteries,
Night has a thousand charms.

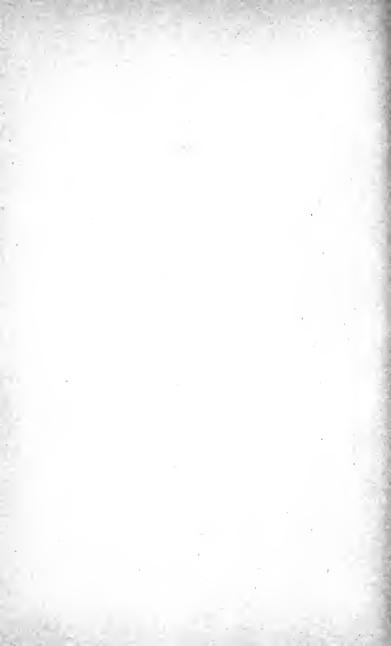
The time draws near. He who, once on a time, came into the hill country of a far away land—who loved the birds—who was often alone—who called the flowers by their names—who was companion of the stars and of the fields—cannot be forgotten. The time draws near when many will go into the woods for pines and cedars with

which to keep green His memory—His love—His unselfishness. So tell of Him, little trees, that men may not quarrel over His commandments but keep them in His spirit.













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